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Bass Guitar Magazine

THE **UK'S NUMBER ONE** BASS GUITAR MAGAZINE

"JAZZ IS AN ART!"

JEFF BERLIN LAYS DOWN THE LAW

CAROL KAYE

SUMMER NAMM

DAVE PEGG AND DANNY THOMPSON AT CROPREDY

LOVE SUPREME FESTIVAL REPORT

www.bassguitarmagazine.com UK £4.35 Issue 109 2014
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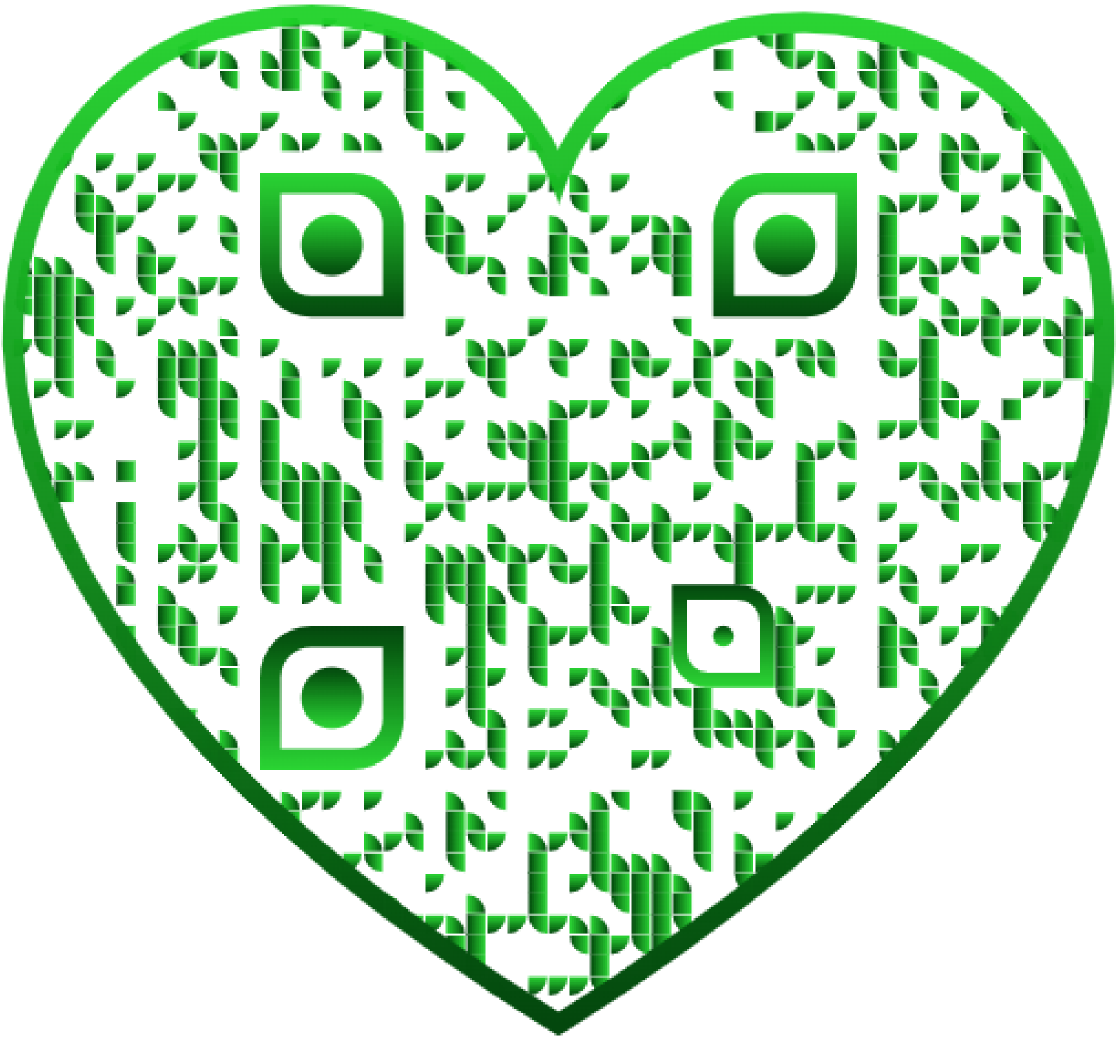

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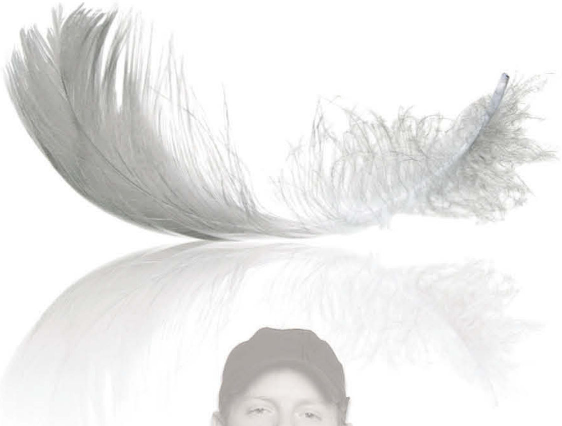

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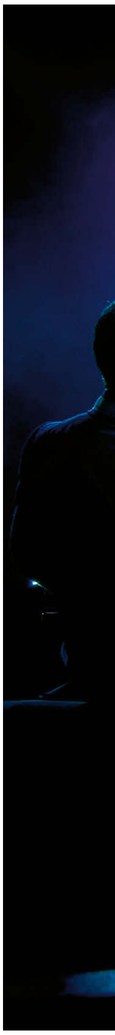
There is no other bass player like Jeff Berlin. Educated, passionate, uncompromising and a bassist who has accompanied a stellar cast of artists as well as building his own catalogue, Jeff has taken the art of bass guitar to a whole new level. It's been an honour to have him as a guest columnist in these hallowed pages for the last year or so, and what better way for Jeff to sign off than with a cover feature? But this month's interview is no mere career run-through: we wanted to know why jazz, a mystery to so many of us rock players, is the key to Jeff's perspective on what makes great bass playing, and why learning theory will benefit all of us. Read and learn. We've also been treated to a rare sit-down with the great Carol Kaye, a bassist whose CV goes even further back than Jeff's. Want to know what it was like to play with musicians such as the Beach Boys in rock's golden era? Head there without delay.

This summer (yes, we actually had one this year) was a feast of festival goodness for bass players, so we dispatched the BGM team to fields of mud nationwide to catch up with stars of the low end. Behold our Cropredy and Love Supreme reports, where folk and jazz were the primary flavours, and also our Summer NAMM report, in which BGM heads to Nashville to sink a few beers with the good ol' boys and learn about the killer bass gear heading our way this year. Add to that our usual, all-budgets, all-abilities reviews and tuition columns and you're holding a bass package that is unequalled anywhere else. That's enough from me: enjoy this issue and we'll see you in October. Oh, and a quick heads up: the London Bass Guitar Show 2015 takes place on 7 and 8 March at London's Olympia. Believe me, you do not want to miss this one...

Joel McIver, editor



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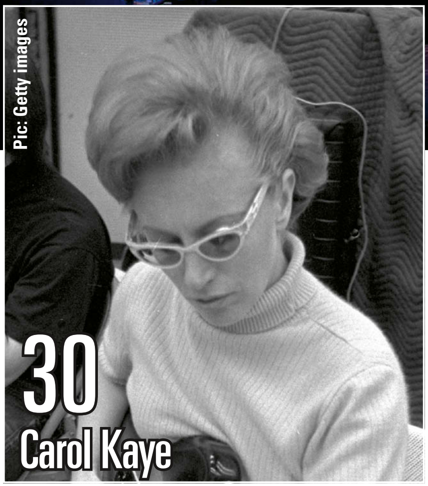
Pic: Getty images



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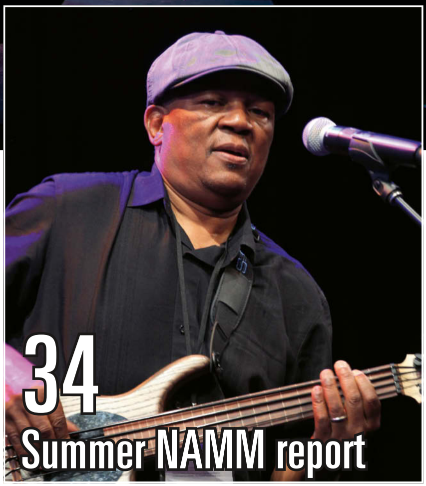

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THE LOW DOWN

NEWS AND VIEWS FROM THE BASS WORLD, COLLATED BY BGM'S TEAM OF INTREPID NEWSHOUNDS

LONDON CALLING

"Steve Lawson is a brilliant musician. I've known about him and listened to him for many years," says up-and-coming bass hopeful Victor Wooten. Endorsements don't really come bigger than that in the bass world, so go and see *BGM* columnist Lawson deliver the goods in London on Saturday 1 November. The great man is accompanied by Twinscapes, the bass duo of Colin Edwin and Lorenzo Feliciati (who blew all our minds several times over at this year's London Bass Guitar Show) and sometime Stump bassist Kev Hopper with his new instrumental trio Prescott. The venue is the Islington, at 1 Tolpuddle Street, N1 0XT, and the evening takes place under the Wayward Basses banner.

BURNEL, BABY, BURNEL!

Shuker Guitars are proud to announce the release of a new signature bass for legendary Stranglers bassist JJ Burnel. As Jon Shuker tells us: "The Carbon-Lite is the third signature bass that Shuker Guitars have built for JJ Burnel in a nine-year collaboration between artist and luthier. It represents the ultimate evolution of the original concept, bringing together all of the attributes that JJ loved about his favourite basses in to one instrument."

For the latest instrument, JJ's challenge to Jon was to create a bass that provided his signature sound: definition and power in the lower registers with a warm, acoustic quality to the mids and a bright controlled treble, while being as light as possible. At the same time it had to be strong enough to cope with JJ's hard-hitting technique, which *BGM* witnessed during the interview for his forthcoming cover feature. Yikes!

The body is made from three different woods. The centre block is a laminate of northern ash and a lower section of lightweight swamp ash; the two wings are made from lightweight alder with a complex chambering pattern and a 6mm alder top. Says Shuker: "The neck is a completely new venture for both myself and JJ, and has required a large amount of research in materials and methods to develop a very complicated and unique construction that no other manufacturer has been able to produce. The core of the neck is Honduras mahogany, a very lightweight but resonant wood. The neck is made 2mm smaller in all dimensions compared to the previous models, then vacuum wrapped in a carbon fibre weave and cast in a thin polyester resin. The wood core is fitted with a two way adjustable truss rod and carbon graphite rods that extend into the headstock to provide exceptional rigidity. An exhibition grade Birdseye maple fingerboard is fitted with stainless steel jumbo frets and the headstock sports a matching veneer."

ABM and Schaller of Germany made the hardware, the bridge is a lightweight ABM unit and the tuners are Schaller BM Lites. The nut is brass and handmade and the Carbon-lite has an all-new pickup, designed and hand wound by Aaron Armstrong. The controls are passive volume and tone, the tone control giving a lower cut off frequency than most passive tone controls.

"My signature Shuker basses have breathed new life into my playing, and made the old stuff exciting again. I can proudly say that I endorse Shuker bass guitars," says JJ. Only 25 examples of this instrument will be made, and are only available direct from Shuker Guitars. We'll be interviewing Jon Shuker in a forthcoming issue.

Info: www.shukerguitars.co.uk

ANDY MAN

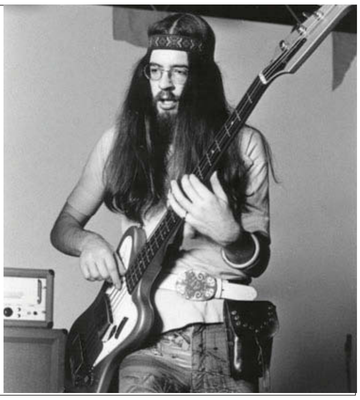
Bassist extraordinaire Andy Irvine has a book out called *Passion And Action: A Musician's Journey* and, bass sleuths that we are, we got the first look at it, *says Ben Cooper*. While Andy may not (yet) be a household name, his skill as a bassist, whether sideman or bandleader, are beyond question. Ask Victor Wooten, Lee Sklar, Robert Trujillo and the other heavy hitters who lined up to pay tribute to Andy's musical chops and also his redoubtable and giving character.

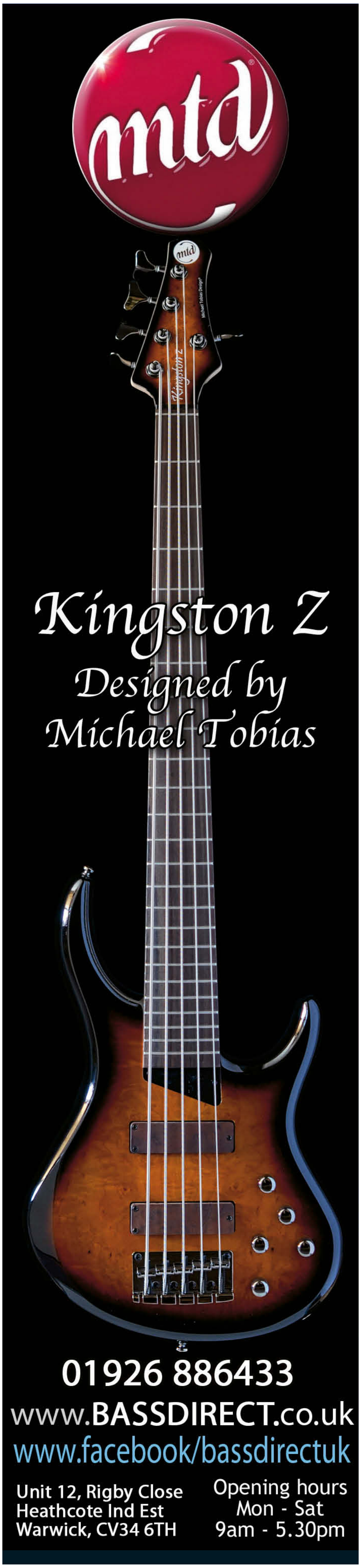
Passion And Action: A Musician's Journey treads the path of the muso's autobiography, following Andy from his childhood inspirations – including encounters with Steve Harris and Stanley Clarke that would shape his attitude for the rest of his life – through to success, tempered with a crippling alcoholism that nearly led to destruction, and finally redemption.

There's a poignancy to Andy's tale: after all, it's a lot harder to come back from the brink without millions in the bank and the safety net of endless reunion tours and 'best of' compilations. This compelling book is a tale of Andy's passion for bass and for music – and by extension life. It's uplifting and inspiring, much like the man's music and clinic tours for Warwick, and a worthy addition to your bookshelf.

GLENN CORNICK RIP

We were sad to hear of the death of Glenn Cornick, bass player for Jethro Tull from 1967 until 1970, on 28 August. The 67-year old musician died of congestive heart failure at his home in Hawaii. "Glenn was a man of great bonhomie and ready to befriend anyone, especially fellow musicians," said Ian Anderson, Tull's vocalist and flute player. "Always cheerful, he brought to the early stage performances of Tull a lively bravado, both as a personality and a musician."





Triumvirate

We select three essential albums from a genre or player.
THIS MONTH: John Myung

1 *METROPOLIS PT. 2: SCENES FROM A MEMORY* BY DREAM THEATER

Consistently voted one of the best prog albums of all time, this is a non-stop onslaught of incredible riffs, complex rhythms and shrill vocals. Lurking underneath it all is the muscular bass playing of John Myung, providing the solid bedrock for the band histrionics that whirl around.

The standout moments include the distorted breaks on 'Overture 1928' and the powerful groove on 'Strange Déjà Vu', among many others.

2 *AWAKE* BY DREAM THEATER

This 1994 effort saw the band going through a state of flux with keyboardist Kevin Moore departing and the band under pressure from their label to produce a more accessible album. Instead of a dog's dinner though, the band served up one of their best albums. Balls-out rocker '6:00' kicks things off with Myung pinning everything down with his fleet-fingered playing before the band delve into more prog-tastic fare on 'Erotomania' and 'Voices'. Check out the lush harmonic intro to 'Lifting Shadows Of A Dream' for the bass highlight of the album.

3 *IMAGES AND WORDS* BY DREAM THEATER

The band's breakout album, and still their most commercially successful, *Images And Words* cemented the band's sound, and to this day continues to echo through their material. At this point Myung was still rocking a four-string bass, but his playing was just as inventive. 'Take The Time' is full of bass magic, from growling ostinatos to melodic counter melodies and tighter-than-tight riff doubling. For finger-knotting precision check out 'Under A Glass Moon' and the epic 'Pull Me Under'.

TONE KING

Tony Levin, bassist with Peter Gabriel and King Crimson (as if you didn't know that), has for the first time joined up with his brother, keyboardist Pete

Levin (Miles Davis, Gil Evans, Jaco Pastorius, Wayne Shorter) to make an album in the style of music they loved listening to when they were kids – the cool jazz of the 1950s. Tony's cello and bass share the lead voice with Pete's organ and piano, and notable players on drums, guitar and sax join them. "Don't expect abstruse songs or long-winded solos – this album is all about great, melodic songs with high level performances by all the players" says the press release, which sounds good to us.
Info: www.thelevinbrothers.com.

BLACK MORE

BGM favourites Johnny Wore Black has released a new single, 'A Cut Above'. It's an intensely emotive track that continues Johnny Wore Black's partnership with our friend David Ellefson of Megadeth, who co-wrote and played bass on this latest track. JWB singer Jay was with Ellefson at Megadeth's headline slot at the Bloodstock festival in August and tells us, "Megadeth played a great set on the Sunday night. David and I hung out and listened to a few of the tracks that are going to be on our album *Walking Underwater Part 2*, out in November. He also signed two gleaming Jackson Signature Kelly Bird basses which will be available through the Johnny Wore Black website in the coming months." If Jay can bear to part with them, that is.
Info: www.johnnyworeblack.com.

Me And My Bass

In which a *BGM* reader tells us about his or her bass gear...
This month: Dave Meaden

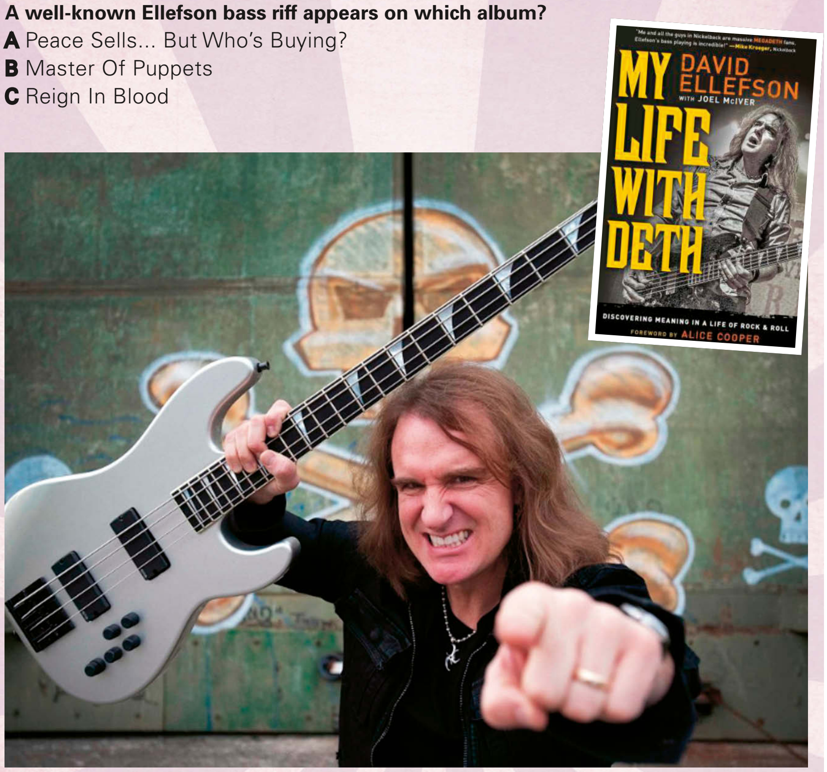
"I have been playing in bands of all sorts since 1964 and currently play in the Liz Owen Band (R&B, soul, blues) and Undiminished (blues). Both bands play regularly in south-west London venues, including the Half Moon in Putney (upcoming dates in September and October). I have a fairly large collection of basses, including various old Gibsons, Fenders, Gretsches and Ovations. With the Liz Owen Band I am currently using a sunburst Gibson ES335 bass, with flatwound strings, through a Mesa Boogie Walkabout Scout. The Gibson ES335 with flatwounds is perfect for getting classic '60s R&B tones. It is an improvement on the EB2 by having a full 34" scale and pickup positioning that gets rid of the muddiness. The Walkabout Scout is the perfect compromise between weight and volume by being eminently portable but packing sufficient punch for all but the biggest venues. I don't really need effects for the styles of music that I play, but I do have a Sonuus Wahoo for the odd occasion when something is needed, and a SansAmp if any of my other basses needs a boost. For practising at home I have a Phil Jones Double Four, which has an extraordinary sound for something the size of a shoebox and, at a full 75 watts, can hold its own in a band rehearsal."
Info: http://thelizowenband.co.uk.

Want to be in this column? Email joel@blazepublishing.co.uk.

WIN!

Megadeth bassist David Ellefson published an acclaimed autobiography, *My Life With Deth: Discovering Meaning In A Life Of Rock'N'Roll*, in 2013, co-written with *BGM* editor Joel McIver. The tome is now available as an audiobook, and Ellefson has slung three of the audio versions our way to be snapped up by the lucky readers who get this right:

A well-known Ellefson bass riff appears on which album?
A Peace Sells... But Who's Buying?
B Master Of Puppets
C Reign In Blood



Write to Bass Competition, Lawrence House, Morrell Street, Leamington Spa CV32 5SZ, or visit www.bassguitarmagazine.com/competition.
Closing date: 7 October.

Congrats to Emily Gibson, who wins a copy of Dave Lewis's excellent new Led Zeppelin book. Thanks to all who entered.

WON!

Revolver

Every month we tell you the bass-line we can't stop listening to

THIS MONTH: 'Georgy Porgy'

Bassist: *David Hungate*
Album: *Toto by Toto*

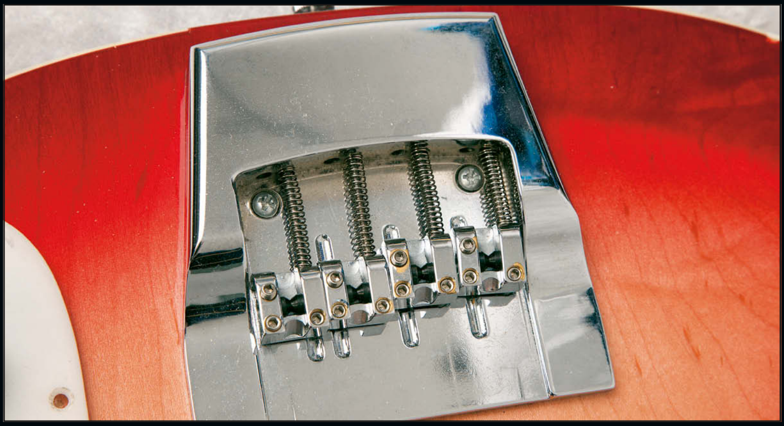
With this major-label debut in 1969, a star was born. Michael Jackson would go on to eclipse his brothers within a decade and become perhaps the most iconic pop music performer of all time. Selling millions of copies around the world, the power of this perfect slice of pop is all in the bass, baby. Wilton Felder's bouncing, soulful playing wears James Jamerson's influence proudly, weaving its own melody while magically keeping the groove going.

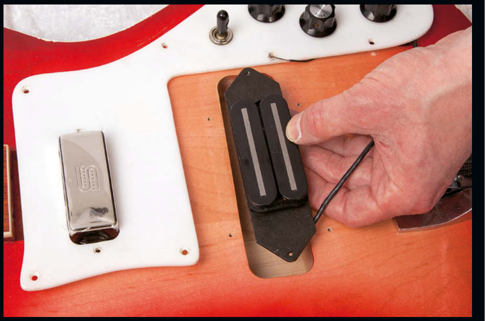
Simon McVeigh has been a session bassist for over 20 years, and works as a bass tutor at the Royal County School of Music in County Meath, Ireland. He has recorded with many artists and runs www.breadheadmusic.com, a contacts resource for professionals in the music industry.

EVERY MONTH MASTER AXE RESTORER SIMON MCVEIGH WORKS ON BRINGING A KNACKERED OLD RICKENBACKER BACK TO LIFE. THIS MONTH THE GREAT MAN TAKES IT TO THE BRIDGE (AND PICKUPS)

Having owned a few Rickenbackers, I feel that nothing comes near their aesthetic, but I am quite aware of some of the brand's weaker points. Although I am a huge fan of the instrument I have spent a long time and a lot of money trying to address these issues and make my basses sound the way I want them to sound and perform. There are some Ric owners who wouldn't change a thing about this great bass, and I can respect that: if you can get through your working bass life with one sound, then that's great – but my problem is that I need the bass to sound several different ways for various different sessions.

At the end of this build I want to end up with an instrument that I can use in my everyday schedule, but I will need to upgrade a few things first that I know from previous projects will work for me. These upgrades are not cheap but they are well





worthwhile. Firstly I have bought a Hipshot Rickenbacker replacement bridge, which is built to fit this bass exactly, so there is no need to drill new holes. I simply need to screw it into place: it's that simple.

This is the type of bridge that I use on my other Ric: it cost me the equivalent of a genuine second-hand Ric bridge, but it gives me a lot more control over the intonation. Recently I was in the studio recording the Swing Cats' new album and I needed to set my action a little higher than usual in order to get a particular sound, which was when this bridge really came into its own.

The standard pickups on a Ric are great but they have their drawbacks: while they have a distinctive sound, they are notoriously noisy and have quite a weak output signal. I want to use this bass as a backup to my gigging 4001 and I need it to have the equivalent spec for a couple of reasons. One is that if I switch between these two basses on stage, I don't want to have to adjust any levels on my backline, and I don't want the engineer to have to change anything out front. For that reason I am putting the same Seymour Duncan Rickenbacker replacement pickups on this instrument as I have on my 4001. These provide fantastic output with a low noise ratio, as I also discovered when I was recording recently: I received lots of compliments from the engineer about their sound.

I am also thinking of long-term logistics, because I can have both basses in separate locations in different countries. I know that whichever location I am in, I have a bass that will sound, feel and perform the same. Sometimes it's easier and more cost-effective to leave a bass on site rather than trying to drag it on to a low-budget airline.

Next time I will be fitting the new Seymour Duncan pickups. There is no mystery to this: it's easier than you think, and you'll be pleased with yourself when it works.

Costs so far:
Bass £400
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Heads £60
Name plate £25
Input £20
Hipshot bridge £100
Pickups £170
Total £790
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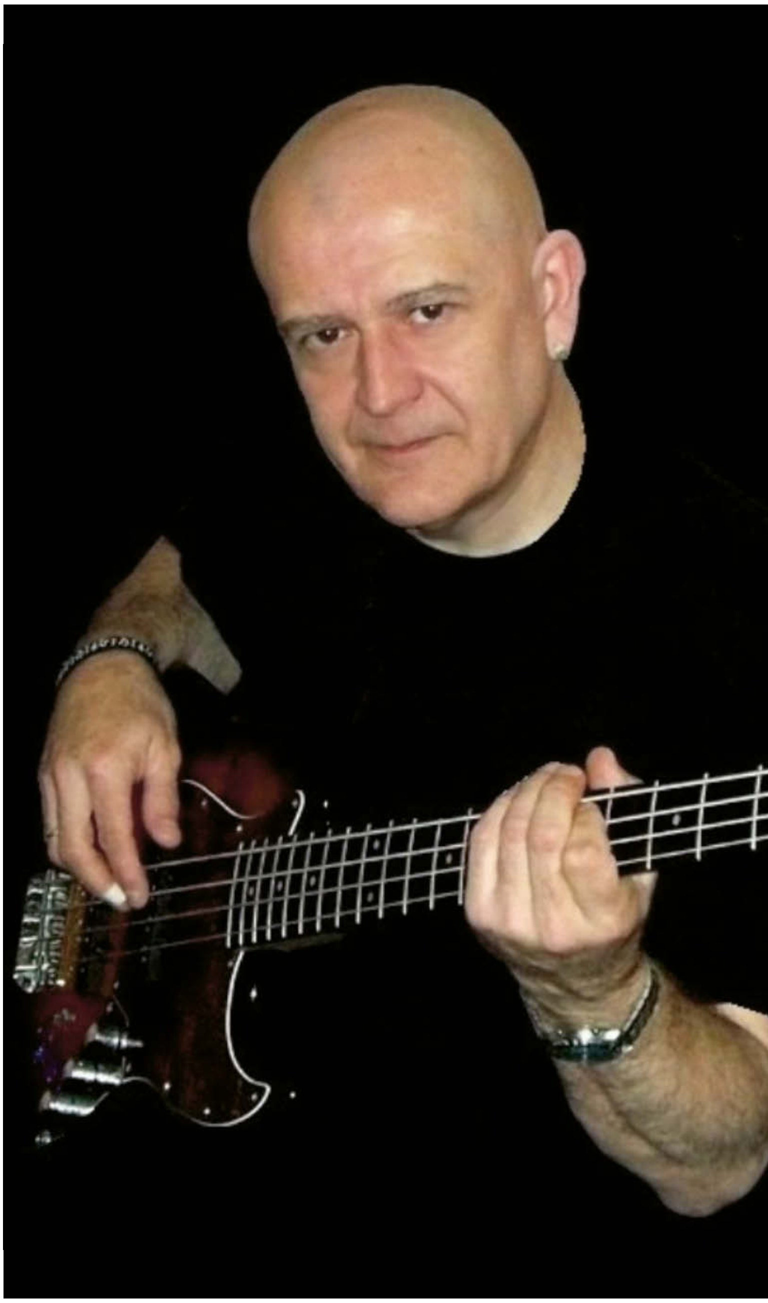
THE BISCUIT'$ BA$$ BU$INE$$

THIS MONTH, BASS TUTOR AND SESSION REGULAR GARY 'BISCUIT' BENNETT DISCUSSES WHAT IT TAKES TO BECOME ESTABLISHED AS A PROFESSIONAL BASS TEACHER



Hi everyone – it's good to be back with you once again, I always look forward to catching up with you all. In previous columns I have discussed many things, including the importance of attaining the very high standard of playing required in order for you to become a professional bassist, as well as the importance of commitment and a desire to succeed. For now, I would like to continue where I left off in my last column and talk some more about teaching.

Teaching is a world away from getting up on a stage and playing in front of an audience by way of a performance, and may not suit everyone, but I would certainly recommend at least giving it a try. Becoming a bass tutor can be one of the most rewarding and fulfilling experiences that you will ever enjoy as a musician. From the outset, you will need to have your people skills highly polished, as you will be dealing with all kinds of students, and you'll also need to have confidence in your abilities not only as a musician, but also as a teacher. Considerable patience will be required to teach efficiently, but the feeling of mutual satisfaction on achieving objectives will be worth its weight in gold.

> "TEACHING IS A WORLD AWAY FROM GETTING UP ON A STAGE AND PLAYING IN FRONT OF AN AUDIENCE BY WAY OF A PERFORMANCE, AND MAY NOT SUIT EVERYONE, BUT I WOULD CERTAINLY RECOMMEND AT LEAST GIVING IT A TRY. BECOMING A BASS TUTOR CAN BE ONE OF THE MOST REWARDING AND FULFILLING EXPERIENCES THAT YOU WILL EVER ENJOY AS A MUSICIAN"

An initial assessment of a prospective student's abilities is essential. That way you can set out a learning schedule that is best suited to their individual requirements. The advised Musicians' Union rate for teaching on a one-to-one basis is £30 per hour, although that is not set in stone. Remember to take into account the cost of your travel expenses before you take on a new student. Should you wish to consider tutoring, I would strongly advise that you join the Musicians' Union, as they can assist you with all matters relating to teaching, as well as with the documentation you will require to cover you for personal instruction. Until next month!

Gary 'Biscuit' Bennett is a freelance bass guitarist and tutor, covering Essex, London and the south-east, with many years of experience in the music industry under his belt. His CV includes hundreds of live performances and many domestic and international recording sessions. Awarded the title of Hartke's 'Best Unsigned Bass Player Worldwide 2008', Biscuit is currently an endorsing artist for Hartke, D'Addario, Planet Waves, Boss, Essential Sound Products and Hypnotic. Contact: @biscuitisation

BASSICALLY SPEAKING

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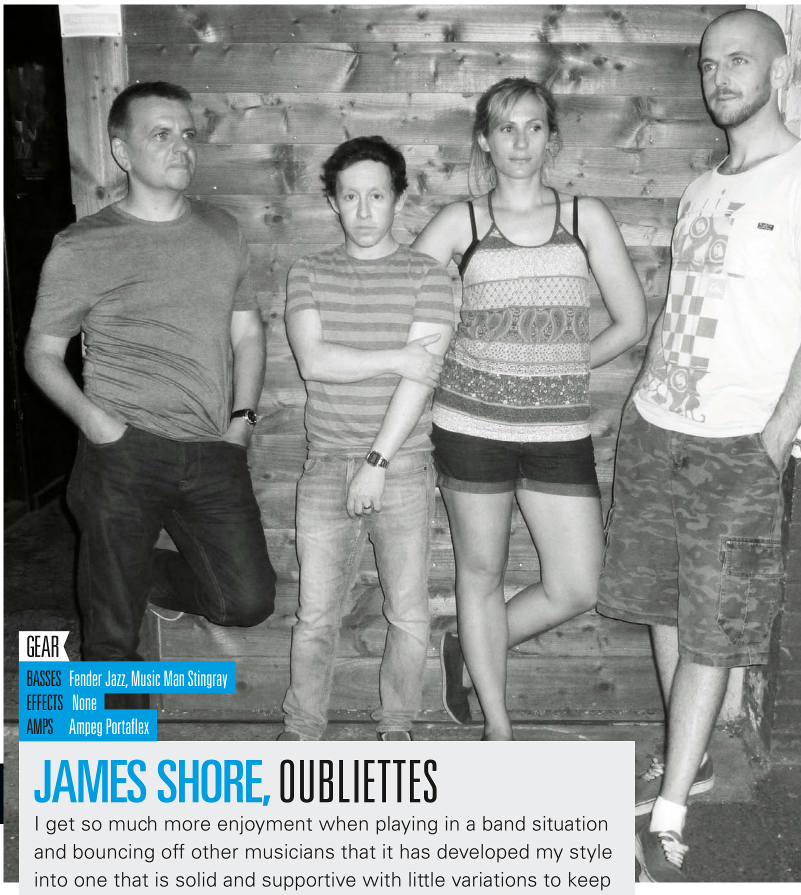
BASSES Ibanez SR5005E, Ibanez SR4005E, Ibanez Sr705TK
EFFECTS AMT Bass Crunch BC-1, Digitech BP-50
AMPS Ampeg SVT-450H, Ampeg SVT-410HLF cab

PAWEL PASEK, DECAPITATED

I'm just a guitar player who plays bass. I think bass-lines should be simple. The most important thing is arrangement and harmonic matching with other instruments. That's why I will never be a bass virtuoso. I play five-string basses, because four is not enough and six is too many... To be more precise, there are a few things that push me to use five-string basses. One is that we play songs in two different tunings. With a five-string bass I don't need to change guitar because of different tunings. If you have a good ear for music, you can play well on every instrument. Just listen to what you are playing and try to be better all the time. My first bass was a Music Man Sterling Ray 5 BK. Not a bad instrument at all. My favourite basses to date are my Ibanez SR5005E and SR4005E. I'm impressed with Japanese luthiers – perfect work and great, huge sound. The greatest bass player that ever lived was Cliff Burton, of course. Decapitated is releasing a new album, *Blood Mantra*, in September.

www.decapitatedband.net



GEAR
BASSES Fender Jazz, Music Man Stingray
EFFECTS None
AMPS Ampeg Portaflex

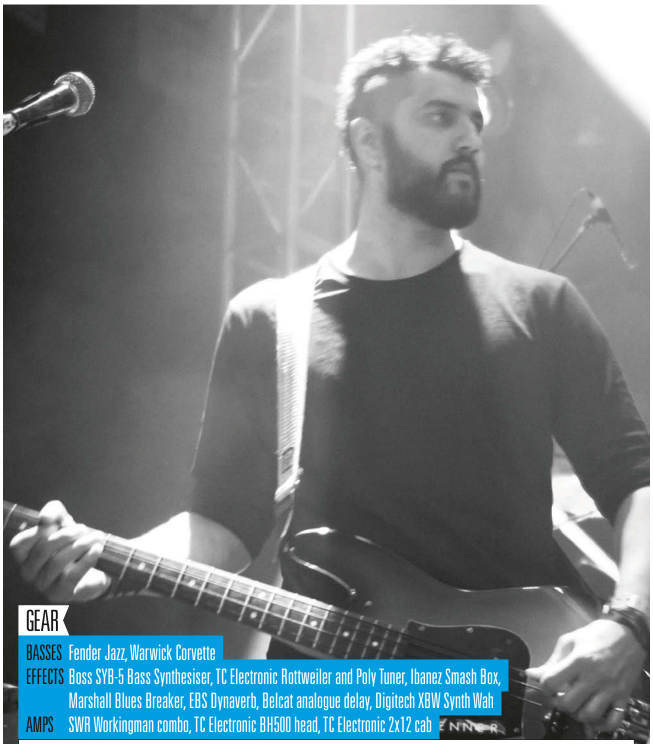
JAMES SHORE, OUBLIETTES

I get so much more enjoyment when playing in a band situation and bouncing off other musicians that it has developed my style into one that is solid and supportive with little variations to keep it interesting. My style has mirrored my choice of basses in that I've never felt the need to move to five- or six-string, as a good old four-string does the job for me. I was brought up on the music of the 1970s and 1980s, just as bass players were becoming more front and central in a band. The moment I heard players such as Bernard Edwards, Sting, Nate Watts, Mark King and Paul 'Tubbs' Williams of Incognito, I just fell in love with the sound of the bass guitar and never looked at any other instrument. In the music I was listening to in this

"I BELIEVE THAT THE SECRET TO PLAYING BASS WELL IS TO USE YOUR EARS AND GO WITH YOUR GUT FEELING"

period, slap bass was the order of the day and it can sound great in the right situation, although it has no place in the music that we play in our band. My first bass was a wreck of an unbranded Japanese Jazz copy with tuners hanging off the headstock. After many years, and much experimenting, I finally got hold of my 1976 Fender Jazz bass, which I use today for all my live gigs and recording alongside my Ampeg Portaflex backline. I've tried other basses since but I always end up back with my Jazz. Saying that, it's not unknown for my Stingray to make an appearance from time to time and with the Oubliettes, I also play around half of the songs on a double bass which sits perfectly in the mix. I believe that the secret to playing bass well is to use your ears and go with your gut feeling. The other band members write the songs and I then have the freedom to come up with a suitable bass-line. In most cases, the first ideas are usually the ones I stick with except for adding some variations. Musicians such as Stevie Wonder, Marcus Miller and Jean-Paul Maunick continually inspire me and I never get bored of listening to a James Jamerson bass-line – for me, it's all about the groove. The Oubliettes are just about to enter the studio to complete some recordings and live gigs are being added all the time.

www.oubliettesmusic.com

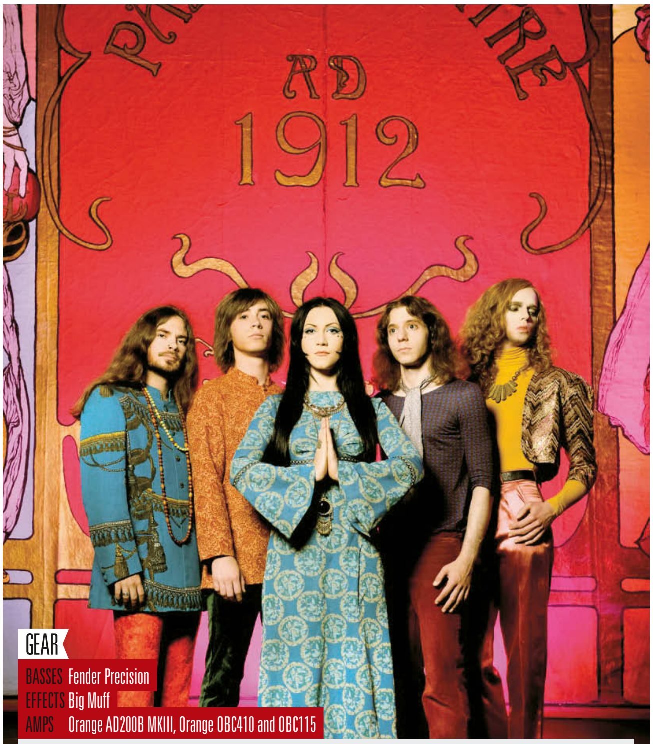


GEAR
BASSES Fender Jazz, Warwick Corvette
EFFECTS Boss SYB-5 Bass Synthesiser, TC Electronic Rottweiler and Poly Tuner, Ibanez Smash Box, Marshall Blues Breaker, EBS Dynaverb, Belcat analogue delay, Digitech XBW Synth Wah
AMPS SWR Workingman combo, TC Electronic BH500 head, TC Electronic 2x12 cab

BEN MARTIN, VENTENNER

I use distortion and other effects to create an adaptable spectrum of tones to fit the light and shade sections within our songs. I play a four-string Fender Jazz: it's the one I've gigged with for years and I feel the most comfortable with, however some songs on the new album demand a broader range of notes and for this I use a five-string Warwick Corvette. The secret of playing good bass is to know your place: playing insanely fast tapping lines is fun but not the true test of your craft. Playing good bass means fitting in exactly where you should, sonically and rhythmically. The bass players I love are the ones that tend to stand out stylistically and have an instantly recognisable sound like Fieldy (Korn), Sam Rivers (Limp Bizkit) and Colin Edwin (Porcupine Tree/Twinscapes) who I had the pleasure of meeting at this year's London Bass Guitar Show. I love these guys because they all apply something unexpected in the bands they are in. If I could steal the bass tone of any album, it would be a difficult coin toss between the beautiful fuzzy bass screeches on Korn's *Untouchables* or the warm bass sound on Opeth's *Heritage*. One thing I love about playing bass is the community that surrounds it: there's a certain unique camaraderie that's pervasive in the bass world. We're a secret underground society that understands and appreciates each other. We have just released our third album, *Distorture*, and we will be gigging all over the country and supporting some great bands.

www.ventenner.com



GEAR
BASSES Fender Precision
EFFECTS Big Muff
AMPS Orange AD200B MKIII, Orange OBC410 and OBC115

JUSTIN SMITH, PURSON

I don't use a five- or a six-string. I don't really see the point. The lower strings never sound good to me. If you need notes that low, use an organ. I ain't got no funk – I like my lines to be melodic and charming. Do what the song needs. Nothing more, nothing less. Bass players in my experience can be just as guilty as guitarists of pissing all over the song to show off how great they are. No instrument is about that. Experiment. Find sounds and tones that don't just work for you, but with the context of the music. The best players are part of the song. My first bass was an old sunburst Hohner P-Bass copy. I used to raise the action on it as high as it would go because I hated fret noise, and still do. I didn't think to just learn to play properly. My favourite bass ever to date is my Fender P-Bass. They are the perfect bass. So simple, you can play with such expression. You are in control of everything just through the way you make contact with the strings, rather than relying on some fancy, battery-powered hyper warp drive EQ or whatever. Same as my amps. I use an Orange AD200, which is perfect – beautiful warm valve tone straight through and responsive to how I play. No bollocks and no pointless extra knobs for controlling the heat of my oven or whatever. We have a new EP called *In The Meantime* coming out in October, followed by a headline UK tour. Then we go to America to join up with Kiss to play the Kiss Kruise, which we still can't believe is happening.

www.pursontheband.com

RHYS HORAN, RAGLANS

I've never had an interest in a five- or six-string. A four-string is all I need at the moment. I don't slap because our songs would sound lame if I did. The secret of playing bass? Tell me when you find out. The greatest bass player that ever lived is probably some lad sitting in his room but can't get a decent band together. If I could get the bass tone of any album ever released, I would choose *The Stone Roses* by the Stone Roses. We released our debut album in March and are going to be touring it all over Ireland and the UK and anywhere else that will listen, so come to a show and see what all the fuss is about.

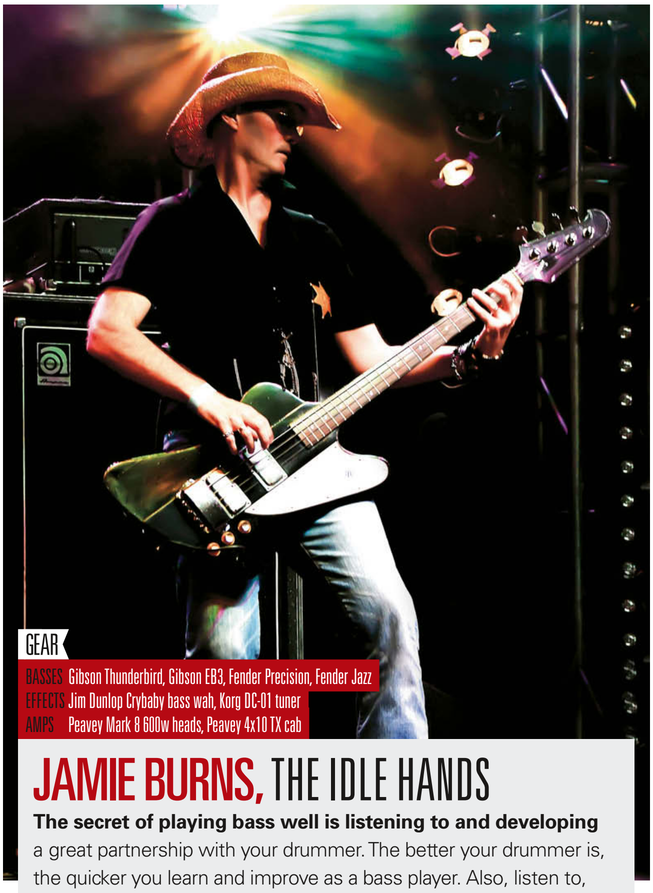
www.facebook.com/raglans

GEAR
BASSES MusicMan Stingray
EFFECTS Ehhh... a tuner, it gives it a really nice 'in tune' tone [Ah, a comedian — Ed]
AMPS Ashdown ABM 500

FRANCISCO 'PANCHO' TOMASELLI, PHILM, WAR, TOWER OF POWER

I've always played a four-string bass. If I need lower tones I simply tune my bass a minor third below to C#F#B E. My first bass was a cheap Bizcane Jazz. My bass heroes are Rocco Prestia, Family Man, Cliff Burton, Bobby Valentin, Jaco, Willie Weeks, Jerry Jemmott, Steve Harris, Michael Berti and Paul Jackson. If I could get the bass tone of any album ever released, I would choose Jaco's tone on any Weather Report album or Jamerson's straight-to-tape sound. We're releasing two albums, one with Philm and one with War. I'm touring Europe and the US with with both bands, as well as with Tower Of Power and Cheech & Chong.

www.facebook.com/philm



JAMIE BURNS, THE IDLE HANDS

The secret of playing bass well is listening to and developing a great partnership with your drummer. The better your drummer is, the quicker you learn and improve as a bass player. Also, listen to, watch and absorb all music. Anything good may be useful to aid your own development as a player. My bass heroes are John Deacon, Jimmy Lea, Dennis Dunaway, Geezer Butler, Roger Glover, Glenn Hughes, Martin Turner, James Jamerson, Noel Redding, Dug Pinnick, Gary Thain, Trevor Bolder, John Paul Jones, John Entwistle, Phil Lynott, Alan Lancaster and anyone else who is any good and plays for the song, not all over it. The greatest bass player that ever lived is – in my opinion, of course – John Deacon of Queen, an economical, consistently great player. The complete package. We are currently on tour promoting our album *Feeding The Machine*.

www.theidlehands.co.uk

TONY MCLOUGHLIN, THE YOUNG FOLK

I play a 1984 Japanese Fender Jazz. It was made for Fender at the famous FujiGen Gakki factory, a musical instrument manufacturer based at Matsumoto in Japan and named after the famous Mount Fuji. I swapped out the original pickups for Seymour Duncan Quarter Pounders and recently replaced the machine heads with Schallers. I have had the bass over 15 years now and it is coded to my DNA: it simply will not play for anybody else. I also own a 1975 burgundy Rickenbacker 4001 and a 1960s handmade German fretless bass. I like to keep the effects simple: keep the flashy stuff for the guys afraid of being found out. If you need me I'll be in the back keeping your flashy shit together. Mind you, I do interchange between mandolin and bass when performing live with the Young Folk, so people in glass houses... I started playing bass in 1991 and my first bass was a Pearl (yes, who make drums) Precision bass. It weighed a ton and you needed the wrists of an Olympic archer to hold down the strings, which were flatwound to further shred my virgin hands. By the time I got my next bass, a Hohner B-Bass, I felt I had survived the Spanish Inquisition. My bass heroes are Dave Holland, James Jamerson, Avishai Cohen, Charles Mingus and Bakithi Kumalo. Slapping the bass is ace because of the bass solo off Paul Simon's 'You Can Call Me Al', but there is a lot of 'vanilla' slapping going on out there.

www.theyoungfolk.com

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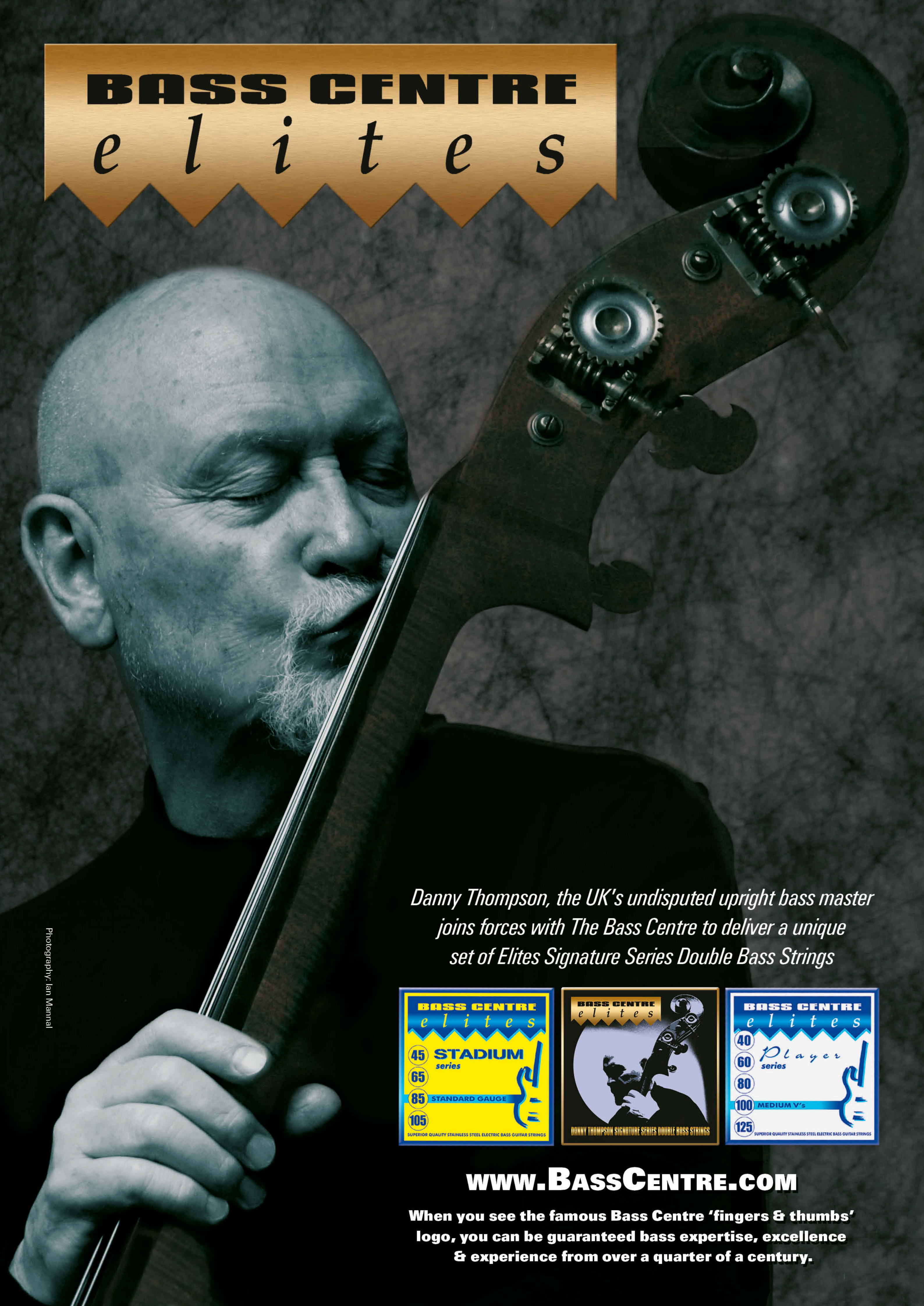
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GEAR

BASSES Fender Jazz, Warwick Corvette

EFFECTS Boss SYB-5 Bass Synthesiser, TC Electronic Rottweiler and Poly Tuner, Ibanez Smash Box, Marshall Blues Breaker, EBS Dynaverb, Belcat analogue delay, Digitech XBW Synth Wah

AMPS SWR Workingman combo, TC Electronic BH500 head, TC Electronic 2x12 cab

ANDY PULLIN, VOODOO SHEIKS

I'm always striving to be in the pocket, while aiming to be as creative and 'moving' as I can be, and avoiding over-indulgence. I'm partial to some thumping and popping. I'm working at the moment on developing the mad Victor Wooten-style 'hang on to the edge of your seat' stuff. I enjoy most techniques on the bass, as long as you're locked in and grooving. From my own perspective, your job as a bass player is to lay down the foundation of a good groove and lock in with the drummer, whatever the style may be. Music's a listening art form, so you have to listen to your band and react well to what happens. You never know when you might get a curveball. If you can learn to play well in the pocket, but have something that's a little bit different, whatever it might be, then great.

My bass heroes? Wow, that's a big list. My first bass hero was Jack Bruce: the first bass riff I ever learned was 'Sunshine Of Your Love'. I love his ferocious, full-on style. Hats off to him, too, because he plays double as well as electric. After Jack, I got into the other British 1960s bass icons: John Entwistle and John Paul Jones. Paul McCartney too, more for the songwriting side of things, but he's got great melody in his playing. Then I learned they all listened to some dude called James Jamerson, so I got into Motown and that was it. I'm still learning his stuff. Bob Babbitt, too. It was a bit later on that I got into jazz and heard about Jaco Pastorius, and there's not much you can say about him that hasn't already been said – simply put, he was a genius. I've also got to mention Norman Watt-Roy, who is so driving, but really funky and in the pocket – I love it.

www.voodoo-sheiks.com, www.andypullinmusic.com

GEAR

BASSES Sandberg Sandbird, Sandberg TM5

EFFECTS Sansamp VT Bass, RBI, RPM, Digitech iPB-10, Ibanez TS9B, EBS Chorus, MesaFluxdrive

AMPS Marshall VBA400, VBC412 cabs

FREDRIK LARSSON, HAMMERFALL

I mainly play five-strings since I always end up needing that low B, or in my case A. I'm not a big fan of 'how low can you go' and just pump on the B string, I use it when there's need for it. Basically I see it, and play it, as a four-string with an option to go low. I used to string a four-string with BEAD but sometimes it felt awkward to not have a G and some of the instruments couldn't handle that setup. For me, it's all about building a steady foundation with the drums. To find the timing and really groove together, then the guitars can do pretty much whatever and it still sounds great. That's the backbone of all great rock bands. I got a black Ibanez Roadstar II, a P-Bass, for Christmas when I was 13. I'm really happy that I kept it instead of trading it for a new one. It was used on the first Hammerfall album, and still sounds great. I have a bunch of really great Ibanez basses and a Hamer Scarab that's awesome but I must say my new Sandberg Sandbird is my favourite. A red Thunderbird with Sandberg-matched headstock and hardcore aged, great tone and feel sums it up. And it's got the looks. My bass heroes? I really like Peter Baltes of Accept. He is kind of underestimated in my opinion but he does a great job. Not too many fancy things during a song, but when needed he can really pull it off. Another favourite is Frank Bello of Anthrax – great attitude and playing. And Duff McKagan – that punk rock attitude shining through is fantastic. These are people who inspired me to want to play bass, not because of their great skills and technique but because they had attitude and groove. That's more important to me than playing fast and technical. We're releasing our new album *r(Evolution)* in September.

www.hammerfall.net

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VICTORIA SMITH, THE RAMONAS

My first bass was a Squier by Fender Precision – which I still have – and the Precision has really been my weapon of choice, whether playing blues or laying down the bottom end for all-girl Ramones tribute band the Ramonas. I've never really got on with Jazz basses but have just bought a gorgeous teal Music Man Stingray, with a maple fingerboard, that is great for studio stuff – really punchy. In the Ramonas I'm using a 'Vintage White' Fender Precision, strung with Rotosound RS66s. It used to have a white pickguard but, after Richie Ramone signed it for me, I got a tortoiseshell one, like Dee Dee's, to preserve the autograph. My bass gets thrown around a lot during gigs, and takes quite a battering, but the Precision just keeps on going. For blues gigs I play a Sunburst Fender USA Precision with Rotosound TruBass 88 flatwounds for a smooth, warm tone – different to the Ramonas. Like most bassists I messed about with slap and that fifth string when I started, but four strings suit the music I play, whether punk, blues or session work and I use fingers or a pick depending on what sound I'm trying to achieve. It was Flea who got me into the Ramones – I read an interview where he said how much of an influence Dee Dee was, so I started to find out more and joined the Ramonas in 2008, playing my first gig with them at the Extremusika festival in Spain in 2009. We are playing a few festivals and touring in Europe this summer and I have several gigs in Europe and the UK with bluesman Will Wilde. **www.victoriasmith.info**

ANDERS MANGA, BLOODY HAMMERS

For what I do, four strings are enough and what I'm used to. It would be good for me to try at least a five-string bass, because we do some songs that drop to lower tunings live. Although I really liked Parliament and Funkadelic when I was a little kid, slapping was never for me. I do love to watch guys like Bootsy Collins and certainly respect that playing style. However, it's just not my taste for what I'm doing in Bloody Hammers. The secret of playing bass well is doing whatever is best for the song. In this band I am the songwriter, lead vocalist and bass player, in that order. I do what's best for the song first, and in my opinion usually that's just keep it simple and heavy. Most listeners aren't going to care how technical a player I am personally – they just want a good song. My first bass was a 1991 Mexican Fender Jazz and it's still my favourite that I use now. The guy I bought it from cheap had a Hipshot detuner installed on it. I'm so used to that now, when I play a bass without a Hipshot it's like driving a car without brakes. It's so convenient to drop to C quickly for songs. My bass heroes are the ones who also sing, because I feel I have something in common with them. I'd say Glenn Hughes is my favourite but also Sting, Roger Waters, Tom Araya and Geddy Lee. I just got a Geddy Jazz and am hoping some of his singing/playing co-ordination mojo will come to possess me somehow. Our new album *Under Satan's Sun* is out now.
www.facebook.com/bloodyhammers

JAMES LASCU, WILSON

I'm strictly a finger player. I basically try to blast my strings as hard as possible while still maintaining precision and timing. With Wilson, I strictly play four-string basses live. I'm not opposed to using multi-string basses at all. If a song calls for some super low notes, I'll gladly pick up my five-string in the studio and lay down some lines, but for the most part a five-string just isn't necessary with Wilson. We're tuned to drop C#: another half step and you're in five-string land anyway. I prefer the feel of a four-string bass all around.

"I DON'T CONSIDER MYSELF A SLAPPER, BUT I CAN DEFINITELY PLAY A LITTLE SLAP STYLE."

They're way more comfortable to play and not so heavy. I've always found five-strings a pain in the ass to play live. All I want to do is headbang and have fun, not think about how bad my fretting hand hurts.

I don't consider myself a slapper, but I can definitely play a little slap style. It's really hard to pull off without sounding hokey. Live I do incorporate slap bass on our song 'Susan Jane'. We have this break in the song we only do live that gets super rhythmic. It screams for a slap part, so I eventually came up with something. At home, I slap while I watch Victor Wooten videos. That lasts for about an hour, then I just want to quit... then I realise I don't ever really use slap anyway, but it's fun to play around with.
www.wilsonisaband.com

GEAR
BASSES Gibson Thunderbird, Gibson EB-2, Danelectro Longhorn, Rickenbacker 4003
EFFECTS Boss Tuner
AMPS Ampeg V-4

ZACK ANDERSON, BLUES PILLS

I've always stuck to four-strings. I like to keep it simple and natural. I like the classic style, and all my heroes played four-string. I can't think of a bass player who I've been influenced by that used five or six strings, but that's just my personal taste. I do not slap, because a bass should be treated like a lady, and they should never be slapped. I just don't like the way it sounds, at all. Maybe it has its place in some music, but it must be extremely rare. So many bass players who use slap tend to overdo it. I find that it's hard for someone to use it tastefully. I saw a good quote from Randy Jackson, 'Ha! Slapping, the ketchup of the bass world.' The secret of playing bass well is always to keep the groove. Never forget your job of keeping the groove, and leave the fancy stuff to the others. If you have to miss notes, it's okay, but never sacrifice the groove. I started playing on my dad's 1970s Rickenbacker 4003. When I was 17 I saved up and bought a cherry red 1964 Gibson EB-2 hollow body. It's kind of beat up but it adds to its character and it made it so I could afford it. I still have it and use it. My favourite bass that I own is my 1965 Gibson Non-Reverse Thunderbird. My favourite bass that I wish I owned is the Rickenbacker 4005, but it's so rare that they go for $10,000+. I'm not sure if that dream will ever come true, but I hope so. Genius is being able to play an overwhelming bass-line in a simple way. Keep the feeling and soul, and don't get lost in technical things, like playing as fast as you possibly can. We're doing a headlining tour in Europe, starting in October.

www.facebook.com/bluespills

GEAR
BASSES Fender Precision, Squier Precision, G&L L2500
EFFECTS Boss TU-3 tuner, Tech21 bass boost/fuzz, Tech21 VT, Boss bass chorus
AMPS QSC GX5 stereo power amplifier, Tech21 Sansamp RBI preamp, Tech21 VT Bass preamp, DBX 166xl rack compressor/limiter/gate, DBX EQ, Emperor custom 4x10 plus 1x15 cab

GEAR
BASSES LTD Deluxe B-1004
EFFECTS Tech 21 RPM Sansamp
AMPS Ampeg SVT-3 Pro heads, SVT-810 cabs

EUGENE GILL, KING 810

Being in a four-piece band with only one guitar player, I have to be conscious of the fact that, as the bass player, it's my job to hold the rhythm down first and foremost. When I was younger I wanted to show off and do all kinds of stuff and follow the guitar players, but as I grew up and matured as a musician I learned that's not always my place. I play for the song, not for myself. I play four-string basses. Four strings are enough to do what I want to do. If the day ever comes where I really need that extra string or two, I'll get them. I play with a pick. I know it's still kind of taboo in the world of bass purists, but I do so by choice. Playing with a pick just gives me the sound I want out of the strings. I play a thick gauge and I hit them hard. My first bass was a Schecter C-4. Still have it to this day. It's been through hell and back (numerous scrapes, scratches, missing knobs… I even had to re-attach the fretboard at one point), but it still works and just has a comfortable feel to it that comes from years of use. I don't really have a favourite bass. Anything

> "FOUR STRINGS ARE ENOUGH TO DO WHAT I WANT TO DO. IF THE DAY EVER COMES WHERE I REALLY NEED THAT EXTRA STRING OR TWO, I'LL GET THEM. I PLAY WITH A PICK. I KNOW IT'S STILL KIND OF TABOO IN THE WORLD OF BASS PURISTS, BUT I DO SO BY CHOICE."

that plays well and doesn't look outrageous. What I use now (the LTD Deluxe B-1004) is probably the most ideal; a simple natural finish and black hardware, decent weight (I don't want it too heavy because I move around a lot), and a great sound. I think it's impossible to just pin point a single greatest bass player, because there isn't one that is the absolute best at every style of playing. Growing up and getting into music, even before I started playing bass, some of the ones that stood out to me were Cliff Burton, Victor Wooten, Les Claypool, Rex Brown, Tim Commerford and Ryan Martinie, to name a handful, and to me all those guys are great, but they all offer something completely different. Our upcoming album *Memoirs Of A Murderer* is out now and we're playing our first UK shows in October.

www.king810.com

THE MU PAGE

PROTECT THAT BASS FROM THIEVING HANDS, SAY THE MUSICIANS' UNION

Instrument theft is an issue for all for musicians. Iggy Pop and Noah & The Whale have had gear stolen, as has violinist Min-Jin Kym who had her £1.2 million Stradivarius swiped at a railway station. So how can you protect your gear?

BE PREPARED

Keep a short description of your instrument and equipment. Include the make, model and serial number written and ready to go. Store it separately. Make it easier for police to identify your gear by taking detailed photos of it from every angle. Focus on unusual details that make it stand out. Use a plain background, and rulers to show the size.

You may not like the idea of tagging your prized possessions with a UV pen, but it could prove worthwhile and is recommended by the police. One musician famously customised three of his violins in the colours of Aston Villa. When the £26,000 violins were stolen, they were quickly spotted on an auction site where they sold for £20 each.

CHECK IT, COVER IT, LOCK IT

Over the years, the Union has received reports of instruments being stolen from every possible location. Double check you have locked your car or van, that your equipment is hidden from view, and that there is suitable security at the venue when on the road.

Do not assume that everyone backstage is supposed to be there. Lock your gear in a room or take turns watching over it. Do not be blasé about your instrument, which is your livelihood, even in familiar surroundings.

ACT FAST

Becoming a victim of theft can leave you dumbfounded, but you need to act quickly as instruments often reappear for sale within 48 hours. Report the theft to the police and your insurer. MU members are entitled to £2,000 of free insurance (see hencilla.co.uk).

Instrument thieves often have no idea what their treasure is worth and will head straight to second-hand dealers to sell them for

> "SIMPLE STEPS CAN MAKE ALL THE DIFFERENCE FINDING STOLEN INSTRUMENTS."

a fraction of their value. Check in with local thrift stores, pawn and music shops. Give them a copy of your photographs, description and contact details. Keep an eye on eBay, Gumtree and Craigslist for suspiciously similar instruments.

Harness the strong community of musicians. Tell your friends, colleagues and post details on the MU pinboard. Spread the word on social networks: the more musicians on the lookout the better, and the moral support you'll receive will help keep you going through this difficult time.

Simple steps can make all the difference finding stolen instruments.

For more ideas, £2,000 instrument/equipment insurance details or any other questions regarding your career as a musician, get in touch at theMU.org.

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AFTER FOUR DECADES, JAZZ FUSION LEGEND JEFF BERLIN IS COMPOSING, PLAYING AND EDUCATING WITH AS MUCH PASSION AS EVER. MIKE FLYNN MEETS THE GREAT MAN AND LEARNS WHY JAZZ THEORY WILL MAKE YOU A BETTER BASSIST – AND HUMAN BEING

Photography by Eckie

Since he first emerged in the 1970s as a powerful virtuoso presence on the electric bass, Jeff Berlin has worked with a who's who of pre-eminent musicians, including jazz icons Tony Williams, Allan Holdsworth, Gil Evans, Toots Thielemans, Al Di Meola, George Benson, Larry Coryell, Bob James, Dave Liebman and the Brecker Brothers among many, many others. He's also worked with maverick genius Frank Zappa, famously turned down an offer to join Van Halen, and forged a strong solo recording and performing career too, with many fine bass-led recordings to his name, including his latest outing, *Low Standards*. Having attended the Berklee School of Music (before it became a 'College') in the 1970s, he's had a long-standing involvement in the music education world.

Ahead of his appearance at the London Bass Guitar Show last March, Jeff made a visit to London in the heavy-hitting company of top fusion blues guitar-slinger Scott Henderson and jazz-funk drum legend Dennis Chambers. The gig took place at the mystical Camden market venue Shaka Zulu, a vividly decorated African restaurant-cum-live venue, bedecked with imposing statues and intricate carvings from floor to ceiling. The gig itself was fiery, with all three musicians effortlessly combining on jazz, funk, rock and fusion classics by the likes of Herbie Hancock, Weather Report and Wayne Shorter, plus a slamming take on the Beatles' 'Come Together' and Sly Stone's 'If You Want Me To Stay'. It was a pertinent reminder that for all of Berlin's willingness to debate the fundamentals of music education and indeed, how to play it, he's a masterful band member and bassist at the top of his game.

When *BGM* meets Jeff, his band have flown in from Vienna that morning after a late-night finish at their gig there – as a result, they've had little or no sleep. In spite of this, when we sit down with Jeff before the gig to discuss all matters musical, he is full of smiles, even quipping his favourite Peter Sellers lines from the classic *Pink Panther* films. "Does your dog bite?" he says in a perfectly Sellersian French accent. "No," he continues. "Ow! Your dog bit me! Oh, but that's not my dog…!" He completes the punchline with a huge laugh that is completely infectious. Can this be the same Jeff Berlin who gets so many people riled up in endless internet debates? Surely not...

Jeff is known as one of the pre-eminent electric bassists in jazz – a genre more associated with upright/acoustic bass – yet he's always played electric, from the start of his career. Why is learning jazz so important for a bassist? "Because jazz is the only music that includes the harmony and the rhythm and the melodic possibilities that exist in all music, that's the reason," he says emphatically. "When people learn jazz, they are learning where to put their fingers on an instrument, where the harmony is. Jazz is the best formula because academically it is perfect – you can put your fingers down for these notes for these specific reasons, and then you'll notice later that this chord you've been practising is also in the latest pop song. There's a real transitional reality in what you practise. The more music that you practise, the more that music becomes a part of your playing. What you study isn't directly applicable to your music because what you practise academically isn't practised to be used literally. But it becomes natural for you to play in musical ways because you've learned in factual ways. And if you can separate the academic from the art, then jazz for me is an art."

Berlin's concern for how music is taught comes across rather like a concerned father who doesn't want to see his children head down an educational dead end. "My message is only to those people who financially invest and expect a return – that's my message," he explains. "If anyone avoids the financial end of it and they are on their own, then they are entitled to pursue any area they want – that's literally it. It's based on finance, because finance demands a return for your investment – and that's when I say that people who pay for a music education in any school, or with any teacher, no matter their reputation, aren't getting what they are investing in – unless music, not function, is being taught."

The foundations of Berlin's own musical abilities began when he was a violinist, studying in conservatoires as a child. Yet when he took up the bass guitar and headed to

Berklee in the 1970s it was at the dawn of the electric jazz golden era which, post-Miles Davis's *Bitches Brew*, would see the rise of Weather Report, Mahavishnu Orchestra and Return To Forever. Does he think the 1970s were a better time to be learning and making music? "My hardcore vision of bass and music was born, not in the time I spent in the conservatoires learning violin as a kid, but from my experiences at Berklee School of Music – not College of Music – that I attended in 1972 onward."

He continues: "When I was there it was entirely, and completely, 100% based on academic and jazz instruction. I came in with an electric bass and a couple of the teachers scoffed at me, because they were upright purists in teaching, but I didn't mind their scoffing at my choice of instrument. Even as a kid I understood the focus on supporting your credo in regards to an instrument that you believe in. My instrument wasn't really regarded as a significant jazz instrument – as this was pre-Jaco, Stanley Clarke had barely arrived, and Jack Bruce was [regarded as] a rock bass player – but when I went to Berklee, it was entirely functioning under music principles. When I went there, John Scofield was my classmate, Mike Stern was my classmate, Gary Burton was my teacher. I studied and played with Pat Metheny; Vinnie Colaiuta, John Robinson and Steve Smith were there studying drums. Bill Frisell was there, Neil Stubenhaus, one of Los Angeles' biggest studio bass players was there, and Abe Laboriel had just left. Berklee was a non-ending source of academic methods that were taught to players, some of whom are recognised as the best players in the world."

While he's been outspoken about how he sees the current state of music education, Jeff says he always saw the greatest players he ever worked with relentlessly pushing themselves through constant practice. "I've always played with guys who never sat still, it was all around me," he says. "After the Berklee era of the insanely fanatical music student and the 100% 'dedicated to music' Music School, I was around the same philosophy in those players. Michael Brecker – who passed away a while ago – never stopped practising, Randy Brecker never stopped practising. I was in New York with Steve Gadd and he played and practised, they all did. I was raised by musicians that guided me and put me on this path, so what I learned from each of them is something that made me what I am today."

This last sentiment sparks a slightly more confessional tack, hinting at the highly competitive musical environment of the time. "I never had a good groove, because I always wanted to play fast and play a lot of notes – which instantly turned off most people from using me," he says. "Once that little light went off in my head, I went to groove, something that I never studied but simply focused on, because out of a pragmatic manner I wanted to play and I wanted to work. All I wanted to do was play like Brecker on the bass – which is an impossibility – but if I aimed at it from about 85 or 90 degrees, I probably hit it about 30. That was significant to me, it guided me to get better and better as a bass player – although each group and musician guided me."

Jeff name-checks several iconic musicians who were all self-taught: "Allan Holdsworth is an individual voice, a self-taught guy who never pretended to be otherwise: the Van Halens are self-taught guys who never pretended to be otherwise. Toots Thielemans – self-taught guy, but also a self-taught, jazz-focused guy because when he came up everyone was studying jazz in Belgium and he became part of that clique of musicians who were dedicated to music."

He also has first-hand experience of two contrasting latter-day musical geniuses, he tells us.

"Frank Zappa was an odd bird, but geniuses often are like that. Look at Jaco Pastorius: an odd bird, clearly a genius, but misunderstood about where his musical ability was developed. He was and he wasn't – he studied with a hundred different guys, and studied composition and principles of playing and he was also self-taught. The myth that Jaco burst forth playing like that never happened. He worked hard to become what he became. Frank Zappa was an odd, strange, quirky, brilliant guy: he stopped a rehearsal we were doing once to talk about cheese. You know, what do you say? I read his music and I practised it. I used to go to Steve Vai's house so he could teach me how to subdivide it – because I never saw anything like it." Jeff sings a complex rhythmic pattern to illustrate his point. "I found that a lot of Frank's music was written and based on quarter notes. He would play things like 5, 7, 11, 4. How did I know? Because I'm academically trained."

Continuing to pour all these experiences into his own music, Berlin has just released his latest jazz trio album, *Low Standards*, which also features acoustic bassist/pianist Richard Drexler and drummer Mike Clark. He's also one third of the Henderson/Berlin/Chambers

"The myth that Jaco burst forth playing like that never happened. He worked hard to become what he became."

(HBC) trio, which also has a self-titled album out, and with whom he's playing tonight as well as touring with at regular intervals. Both projects see Jeff throwing himself wholeheartedly into the music: "*Low Standards* is the latest in my evolution as an artist – this is my art. It was interesting for me to play the role of a non-bassist while I had an upright bassist play underneath me, hence the title *Low Standards*, because of the two basses. I cover a whole lot of variety of interactive guide tones and melodies that I don't think I've heard elsewhere – for that reason I'm extremely proud of this CD, and for that reason I think *Low Standards* almost stands on its own."

Playing with Scott Henderson and Dennis Chambers is a whole other level of real-time learning experience too, as he explains: "This band provides me a great opportunity for interaction, a lesson in supporting these guys without overdoing it, plus I get to solo – so my solo ability as a bass player has improved almost from the first week of touring with these guys because I'm listening to Scott do this astonishing stuff, and I'm jealous and I say 'I want to do this stuff too!' I can search deeply and all my training and experience from all these years starts to come out, I'm influenced, and we listen and respond to each other."

He goes on: "In this band, I found a completely new way to affect how the guitar player sounds and never get in his way. It's a growing experience. I'd describe this trio as a fusion version of Cream. Scott, Dennis and I respond in a nanosecond and sometimes strive to attain such high levels of playing that we fall right on our heads, with people watching the crash, and we're OK with it because it only happens sometimes. Actually, we are free from worrying about mistakes because they usually become a part of the way that we use them to play even beyond our ability of that night's gig. It's the most rewarding, freeing experience for me as a bass player because I can play simple or I can play the most complex stuff I've ever played –it's permitted in this band. In this group it's insane, especially three old codgers like us. We don't mess around: we're almost fanatically serious about it. I've seen Scott get furious over a so-called 'bad' solo, or seen Dennis get dark when 'that' drum performance didn't work for him. For me it's not a pleasant thing either, but maybe I'll say 'I'll learn from that ridiculous screw up I just did'. It's fun in the bumpy ride that we have together, and that's what people will see from us each time we play."

As for his renowned warm, punchy fingerstyle tone,

Jeff's setup is as straightforward and direct as his attitude to making music, especially with his signature Rithimic bass from Cort. He explains that he was pleasantly surprised when he received the first ever Rithimic. "My bass needs have always been simple. My bass just has to feel and sound great. I went to Cort with the suggestion that they consider building a bass that was based on the great concepts of the past – that is, to design a fantastic-feeling neck, a low action and great tone that could fit many styles of music. What amazed me was that Cort built exactly what I was looking for in the very first model that they sent to me to try out. I fully expected that after playing that first instrument that I was going to go back to them and ask for a few corrections. But that didn't happen. That first model that they sent to me was so perfect, that the only correct was to make the body a little thinner, which they did in the second model that they sent me to try out. This second model is now my main bass guitar. It is the most playable and best-sounding bass guitar I have ever owned. The good news for consumers is that all Rithimics will mirror this prototype that I now own and use. The only differences will be in the fingerboard and a couple of particular parts that I wanted on mine, which would have raised the price too high if they had built the bass for sale with these items. But the factory models that they will sell will have the exact same body, neck, bridge, and pickups as the ones I have on my own Rithimic."

The instrument's eye catching half-and-half top-wood design has an interesting origin too: "My wife made a passing comment that the façade of my new bass could be divided into two differently combined woods instead of the montage of different woods that I had on my bass when I was with Dean Guitars. On a whim, she sketched out a couple of roughly drawn bass bodies split into two slightly chaotic sections. I sent these rough drawings to James Suh at Cort, who instantly got the idea that I was conveying. The result was a bass that became one of the most photographed bass guitars at Winter NAMM in 2014. The bass that Cort built simply fascinated people. It almost looked 3D, with a spalted maple mountain range appearing to sit on an orange padauk background. Cort has plans to put out other versions of this design with other woods and I'm excited to see what they come up with."

> *"Jazz is the best formula because academically it is perfect"*

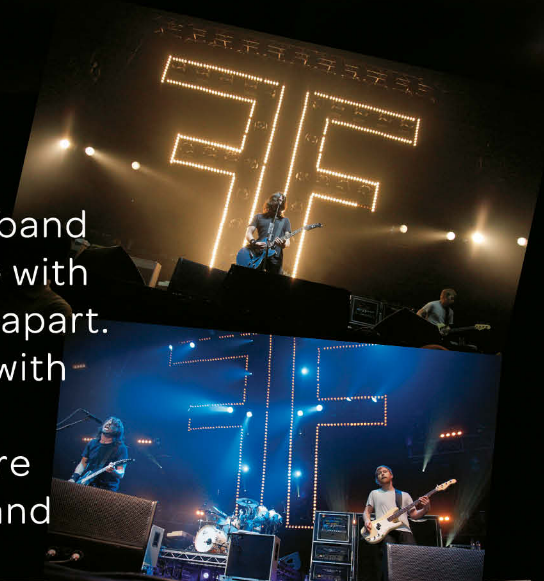
Jeff's bass requirements may be streamlined, but there were some personal custom tweaks he wanted to incorporate when it came to the pickups and bridge, he tells us. "I prefer passive basses, because active basses have a certain artificial sound in them that I never liked. Bartolini built pickups specifically for this instrument. You won't find those Bartolinis anywhere else. I also made a switch to the Babicz bass bridge when my old bridge company Leo Quan Badass Bass Bridges went out of business. Since 1975, I've only used Badass bridges and Bartolini pickups on my basses. But, when Badass closed its doors, I was introduced to the Babicz Bass Bridge and noticed an even higher quality designed bridge, which allowed me to adjust my strings more finely and lock in the changes. Plus, the tone of my bass really sung out by having the Babicz on my bass."

Completing Berlin's plug-in-and-play setup are his trusty signature MarkBass combos. The reason he's with MarkBass is straightforward too: "Tone. Nothing more. Nothing less. Everybody builds great bass amps these days, but it is tone that separates MarkBass from all of them, in my opinion. For a decade, I tried all kinds of amps but never liked the tone enough to accept endorsement offers. I never could bring myself to accept an endorsement offer if I did not fully believe in the product. The tone that comes out of my amp is round, centred and punchy, and my bass notes ring like bells. It sounds sort of compressed although there is no compression built into the amp. I remember playing one note and as I held it out, the note simply sustained and then slowly decayed while maintaining the exact same tone. I have literally never heard any amp sounding remotely as good as my 15-inch combo."

Whether it's through his tireless pursuit of musical knowledge, or wanting to share his joy of simply playing music, it's refreshing to know that no matter how much he's achieved, Jeff Berlin remains an eternal student. For now he's entered a new phase, expanding his horizons and continually pushing himself and his bass beyond the limits – while also taking the time to share and play music with anyone who wants to and listen. That's something we can all learn from.

Info: www.jeffberlinbass.com

REAL BANDS REAL AMPS



....."For Years I was really frustrated because my band is really loud, In order to compete at that volume with that much low end, all other amps would just fall apart. The Ashdown didn't. I can turn it up to compete with those guys and still have the tone stay together. I know there are a lot of other bass amps out there but I found what I was looking for with Ashdown and have stuck with them for over 12 years".....

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Pic from Getty images

THE FIRST LADY

CAROL KAYE IS A LIVING LEGEND OF THE BASS GUITAR. ALISON RICHTER MEETS HER FOR A CHAT ABOUT HER UNIQUE CAREER

Whatever your preferred instrument or genre, Carol Kaye is part of your history. You've heard her playing on your favourite classic songs, on the radio, on television, even on your parents' records. Her style and influence are in your musical DNA, through the countless albums, hit singles, television theme songs, and movie soundtracks that feature her iconic guitar and bass-lines.

That's her work on the Beach Boys' legendary *Pet Sounds* album, on records by Ray Charles, Glen Campbell, Sonny & Cher, Frank Sinatra, the themes from *Mission: Impossible* and *M*A*S*H*, scores for *Butch Cassidy And The Sundance Kid* and *The Thomas Crown Affair* – and those aren't even a fraction of her sprawling discography. As one of the A-list session players in Los Angeles, she worked with top producers and arrangers, working with the likes of Michel Legrand, Lou Adler and Phil Spector. Quincy Jones, whom she describes as "a genius", wouldn't book a film session without her. "You not only play well," she remembers him telling her, "but the sound you get on that bass is one that nobody else can get."

British readers may well have heard much of Carol Kaye's amazing tale in the BBC Radio 2 documentary *The Carol Kaye Story*, broadcast in June and presented by veteran DJ Johnnie Walker. Born in 1935 in Everett, Washington, to musician parents, Carol began playing guitar at 13, gigging at 14, and was on the road with a big band at 18. "My husband was the bass player and I was the guitar player," she says. "We travelled and played in the nicest places throughout the country. I was young, but back then, at 18, you grew up fast. When you were born in the Depression years, there were no entitlements. If you wanted to eat, you got out and worked, and that's what I did."

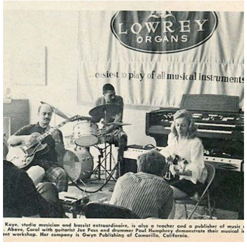
By 21, Kaye was a divorced mother of two, living at home with her mother. She was a working musician, playing jazz and bebop guitar in Los Angeles clubs, and also worked as a technical typist. "I was cleared for top secret because I was typing manuals for the missiles they were building back then," she says. "I had a family to support, and while I worked with the finest musicians and earned just about as much as they did, it wasn't enough to raise a family, so I had to get day jobs." In 1957, the opportunity to try studio work, at the offer of producer Bumps Blackwell, was a life-changing move. Her first session was with Sam Cooke. Kaye's musical chops, as well as her ability to play well with others – both literally and figuratively – opened the door to steady recording dates and her ascent to being a first-call session player, award-winning musician, educator, and respected author of instructional books, beginning with 1969's self-published *How To Play The Electric Bass*.

> "YOU WANT AN INSTRUMENT THAT GETS ALL THE SOUNDS, NOT JUST ROCK AND POP. AS A STUDIO MUSICIAN, YOU DON'T COLLECT INSTRUMENTS. I HAVE ONE BASS AND ONE SPARE. YOU'RE A MUSICIAN, AND YOUR INSTRUMENTS ARE YOUR TOOLS"

Kaye's transition to playing bass happened in 1963, when she filled in for a musician who didn't show up for a session. The Fender Precision, she once said in retrospect, "was not a great instrument, but it got a certain sound that no other instruments got." That certain sound, she says, came from using flatwound strings, playing with a pick, and sometimes raising the strings or muting. "It wasn't a jazz instrument, but it was exceptional for that day and time," she says. "It got a great sound in the studio for rock'n'roll and pop music. I knew that eventually other instrument companies would make a better bass. For me, it was like a board with strings. But back then there weren't choices like there are now. Back in the late 1950s, I had a great jazz bass and an acoustic guitar that I used for playing jazz. The Fender instruments came on strong with a nice, clean sound to record in the studio. It was a hot sound; they had great pickups."

Today, her instrument of choice is the Ibanez SRX700 with Thomastik-Infeld strings. "I switched in 2001 because the Ibanez gave me the jazz sound that I wanted," she says. "If I went in to do a rock date right now, I could get the same sound that I got in the 1960s on this bass. You want an instrument that gets all the sounds, not just rock and pop. As a studio musician, you don't collect instruments. I have one bass and one spare. I may have had three or four at the same time. You're a musician, and your instruments are your tools."

The art of making hit records and creating lines was fun, she says, and it was indeed an art, "something not everyone knows how to do." But the days and nights were long, 12 to 15 hours a day, three or four records a day, thousands of records and thousands of songs. "The money was great," she says, "but it was a lot of work. We stayed awake by drinking coffee, and the guys would smoke. I pushed myself. I worked too hard. But I had three kids. I had someone to take care of them, which was a blessing. I paid her well and she lived in our house. Your days as a studio musician are numbered and we knew that some day it would all stop, so you take everything. You can't afford to say no. But you also can't afford to lose sleep and slave like



that and drink so much coffee just to stay awake and stay alert. You eventually burn out. It got to a point, at the end of the '60s, where you saw people on drugs in the streets in Hollywood and it wasn't safe to go to the studios. And the music got boring. I quit because I was tired."

She stepped away from full-time session work, committing herself to select recording and touring projects until a car accident in the late 1970s put her career on hold. She had surgery in 1994, which allowed her to pick up her instrument again and resume recording, performing and teaching. Her position as a stateswoman in the music industry, and a career spanning some five decades, gives her a unique perspective about the origins and development of popular music.

"When I grew up in the late '30s and the '40s, it seemed like music was necessary to express yourself," she says. "In the war years, they used to say, 'Loose lips sink ships'. People did not talk. They worked in the aircraft factories and in the shipyards, things like that. They couldn't talk about it, but they could go out and dance and sing songs. Music was a way of life for everybody, and has been since the Depression."

As tastes changed, so did music, with each generation wanting something other than what their parents listened to. By the time Carol was ready to step back from the gruelling studio hours, rock'n'roll was in full force. "The singers in the late '50s and early '60s were great," she says. "They could sing in tune. Onward into the late '60s, it started sounding like cardboard to me. Some of the music from the rock groups was not really that good." Still, much of it stands the test of time, as the music from previous decades finds a new, young audience. "I think that every generation romanticises the past," she says, "but the music has gone downhill so badly these days that more and more they're digging into the past because that music sounded real good compared to what's going on today. We were a bunch of experienced jazz musicians who cared about the music. We took pride in creating good product. We did not think that that music would last more than 20 years, but that's what happened, especially as music has gotten worse and worse."

"I THINK THAT EVERY GENERATION ROMANTICISES THE PAST, BUT THE MUSIC HAS GONE DOWNHILL SO BADLY THESE DAYS THAT MORE AND MORE THEY'RE DIGGING INTO THE PAST BECAUSE THAT MUSIC SOUNDED REAL GOOD COMPARED TO WHAT'S GOING ON TODAY"

Early on in her teaching career, she gave private lessons and worked with beginners. She now works exclusively with professional musicians, students who "don't need a lot of lessons to get going". Decades later, however, her instruction methods have not changed. "I teach the way people taught music in the '50s: chordally," she says. "Everybody who taught music then had to get people out to play standards and jazz, because that was the music that everybody played. It wasn't simple rock'n'roll back then. But it's not hard to teach, and it's fun to show people how to do it in three or four months. You don't have to go to school for four or five years to learn how to play music. I teach on Skype worldwide and it's fun to show them how to really play, how to comp, how to solo, how to do all that. There's a joke that people love to sleep during the bass solo. Well, they won't sleep during the stuff I teach."

While Carol's educational techniques and methodology remain tried and true, what's different is the way in which information is absorbed and processed by students. "I do see changes in the way their brains work today because of social media," she says. "You have to teach from a different angle to get through to the inner self that you need to reach in order to teach them the feeling and how music works. Music doesn't work with words. It works with sound. Sound comes from the right brain, not the left brain, so I notice the difference in the teaching I have to do. Back in the 1950s, students didn't need to know *why* they had to learn things. They came in for a lesson, I saw what they needed, I gave it to them, and within three or four months they were out there playing gigs. Today, a lot of time is spent explaining why they need to practise this, and why they need to learn this, because they don't understand. If they don't know why it's important, then they won't practise. But the students I have practise, and they have to practise more than an hour a day to learn anything great, too."

Social media has not only made it possible for her to teach students in other countries; it allows her to communicate with fans via email and a forum page on her website. Kaye responds to queries and even handles her own PR. Interview requests go directly to her inbox and she responds – no manager, no publicist. "I take care of my own thing. I can't trust anybody else. Are you kidding?" she laughs. Still, given the scope of her fanbase and the legacy…

"None of us have ever been stars," she says of the studio musicians with whom she worked for so many years. "I don't think about that. You go in, you cut the record, and you go out the door on to the next record. My book has educated a lot of bass players who turned out to be fine teachers themselves and are still playing, people like John Clayton, and that's good, because I'm interested in spreading the music. I'm not interested in personal fame. I make fun of that. I think it's crazy to think about stardom and fame. We were part of the process that turned people into stars, and at the time we all said, 'I don't want to be a star'. We saw what that process was like and all the stuff you've got to go through. A star can be taken down real quick, too. If the public doesn't like you, you're gone. But when a musician plays his instrument, he's in it for life. George Benson said it best when he sang, 'I can play this here guitar.' He's right. You're a musician, and nobody can take that away from you."

Info: www.carolkaye.com

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Summer 14 NAMM®

NAMM TOUR

JAMIE BLAINE HEADS TO NASHVILLE TO DISCOVER THE NEXT HALF-YEAR'S WORTH OF KILLER BASS GEAR. STOP DROOLING AT THE BACK!

It's 10am and unseasonably cold in the epicentre of American music, Nashville, Tennessee. We're standing on the street corner staring up at a 16-acre, two-million-square-foot, guitar-shaped enormodome, home this summer to the three-day National Association of Music Merchants trade show, featuring the latest, greatest, cutting-edge instruments and gear – or as our media badges say, 'Welcome to Summer NAMM, Nashville 2.0.'

For our money, there's nothing like bone-rattling classic rock to get the blood going early in the morning, so we head straight for the neck-straining majesty of the Orange Amplifiers compound, strap on an axe, plug into their tiny Terror Bass 1000 amp and take it back to the Black Country with a few Glenn Hughes riffs. It's that classic Orange sound – fat and nasty, gloriously gut-wrenching British steel. Though the Terror Bass is no bigger than a lunchbox, it feels like we could peel the paint off the ballroom walls if so inclined. It felt nice to have versatility without having to navigate a laboratory tech's set of buttons, sliders and knobs and the Orange rig delivers on all fronts. It looks cool and sounds awesome – everything you'd expect from classic Orange.

A signature model always makes us want to play a signature lick. Spotting the pre-distressed limited edition Tommy Stinson TS-4 bass at the ESP booth, I shoulder it, jack straight in to a nearby amp and launch into the Replacements' post-punk anthem, 'The Ledge'. We're no Stinson, but the TS-4 possesses perfect bite for punk and rock stylings and a super-thin neck for speedy fingering. With Gotoh tuners, EMG J/P pickups in the bridge and neck positions and a nice weight, it feels like a 'rock star' bass. Just for kicks, we roll up the treble and put it through its paces on 'Chinese Democracy' and the Stinson axe sounds great as well.

The ESP RB-1005 Rocco bass is also new for 2014. Tower of Power bassist Rocco

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Prestia opted against his own signature edition and instead chose to work closely with ESP on design. With its burl maple finish, it's one beautiful guitar, and plays like a dream as well. Aguilar J and P pickups give tons of tonal options and the action is silky smooth. We're testing the five-string, but the Rocco comes in four- and six-string versions as well.

One of the most interesting new products is found at the UK's own Porter & Davies booth, where we give their P&D Bass Plate a spin. The idea is fairly simple as the bass frequency is fed through a platform and into the bassist's body via bone conduction. It's a strange experience to be sure, feeling the bottom end from your heels to the top of your head, but it's incredibly satisfying as well, and after a bit of noodling around with a drummer at the next booth it's easy to see that more feedback and feel could help players lay back and stay in the pocket.

As a player who's always pleading for "more bass in the mix" (much to our bandmates' frustration) the P&D Bass Plate might be a relationship saver as well. But the best praise we can give is it's loads of fun just to crank the master, stand tall on the P&D Plate and improv on the bass-line from 'Another One Bites The Dust'. But after a good five minutes of weary smiles from the banjo dealer next door, we should probably be moving on, eh?

Lunchtime, and already we've got a Yamaha sack full of swag from the 438 vendors scattered across the showroom floor. Picks and stickers and sticks and strings... Just as we're leaving for a bite, we pass the Hammond booth where they're demoing the new Leslie 'G' pedal. Though it's not exclusively for bass guitar, there's an urban legend that says that John Paul Jones got that crazy bass sound on 'Heartbreaker' by routing a Fender Jazz through a Leslie. Nashville's renowned BBQ is calling, but we simply cannot resist. There's no Jazz Bass handy, but the good people at the Monoprice booth are kind enough to loan us their Bourbon Street Jam Electric, which indeed has the classic look of a '70s Jazz – so we set off to test the legend.

The Leslie 'G' is a cool-looking silver-on-black box with a smaller footprint than its predecessor: this one should fit easily in a pedalboard. There's a 'Wet' pot and another for 'Dry'. One dial for 'Rise/Fall' and another marked 'Red Line' which apparently controls the speed of the virtual rotors, plus two stomp switches for speed and effect and a selector for three different classic cabinet sounds. Are we Leslie experts? By no means. Does it sound sort of cool? Yeah, as a matter of fact, it does. Returning the bass to the Monoprice booth we have to pay them a compliment: It not only looks good, it feels quite nice too. The jaw-dropper? The Bourbon Street Jam retails for under £100 and comes professionally set up. That's great quality at a wallet-friendly price.

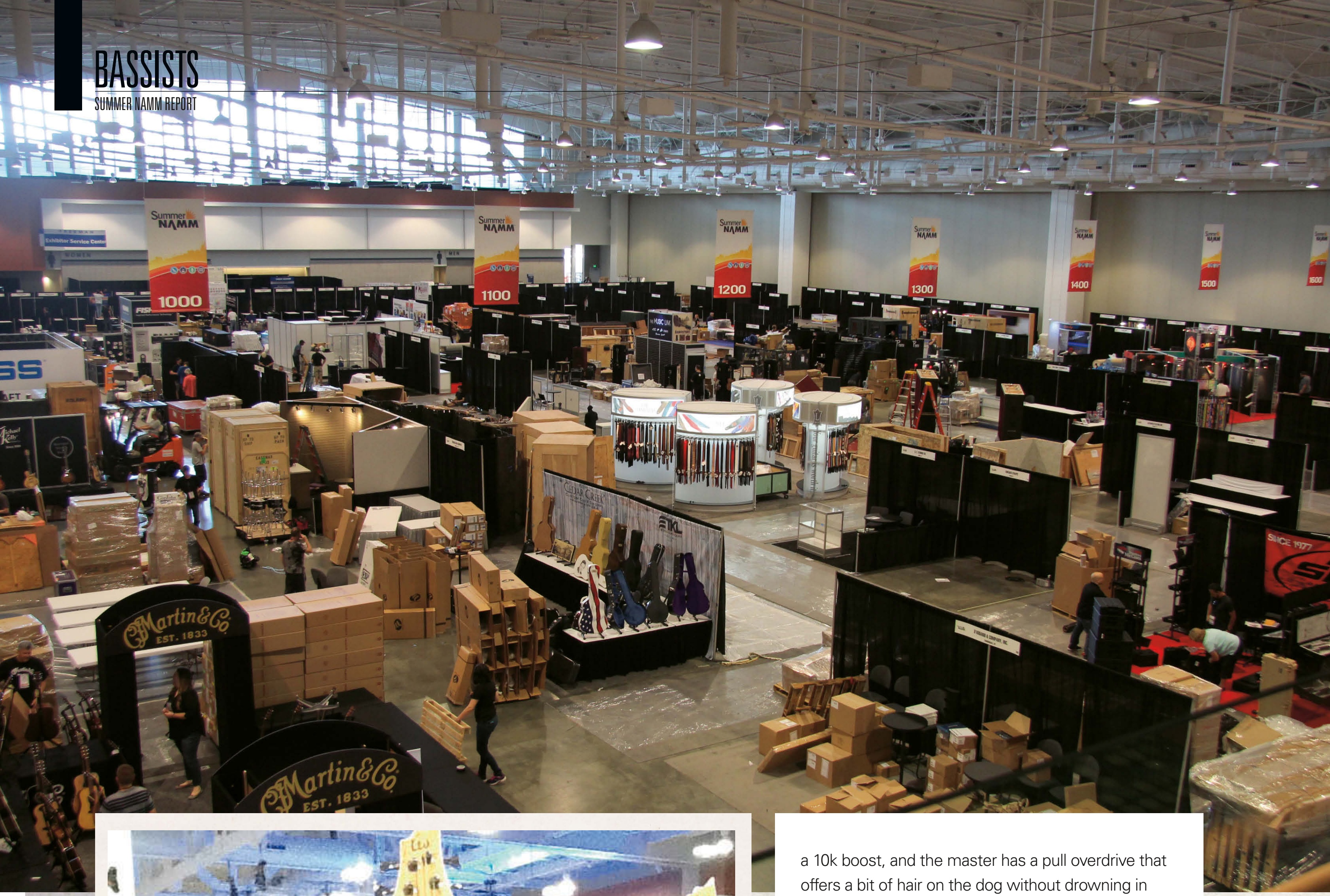
After a quick lunch of world-famous Tennessee brisket and slaw at Jack's Barbeque, we slide into one of the coolest booths at this year's NAMM: Earth Quaker Devices. Decked out in blood red carpet with psychedelic posters, the effects pedal maker from Akron, Ohio showcases four new stompers in a setting that feels like some far-out basement party from 1976. Earth Quaker VP Julie Robbins drags us stage front and tells the guy on bass to show off their latest fuzzbox, the aptly named Cloven Hoof. It's got killer wicked grit, so killer wicked in fact that we bang our fists against the stage and demand that he play some Sabbath. Stroking his goatee, the bassist casts an evil grin, clomps down the toggle and lays hard into 'Children Of The Grave' with all the nasty, dirty character of classic Geezer Butler. "Cloven Hoof, man," he says, with the last note throbbing. "It's got

that splatter, y'know?"

"Massive splatter!" we reply.

After the Sabbath fest at Earth Quaker, a little balance and calm is needed. We ease over to the Breedlove/Two Old Hippies booth to visit with Tom Bedell. Tom is a laid-back kind of fellow and believes in taking his instruments from 'seed-to-song', supervising the process completely through from forest to finished guitar. We try out his bestselling Solo Bass, a sweet acoustic with amazingly easy action and a handy sound hole on the side, easily plugged with a rubber cap. The tone is warm and clear with full sustain and none of the noise or muddiness that plagues many acoustic basses. This might sound spooky but sometimes, if you know how to listen, the guitar will tell you what song she wants to play. Before we know it, our fingers are moving and the sound coming out of the Breedlove Solo Bass is Seals & Croft's 'Summer Breeze'. And sure enough, it makes us feel fine.

Nashville is a town full of session players and we've heard good things about Swan Song basses so we stop by for a look at their 4Directions model [reviewed in last month's *BGM* – Ed]. Rich Neville, former bassist for country-rock pioneers Poco, is on tap as well as Swan Song creator Nelson Joyce. Neville saddles us up with the 4Directions' 34" scale, five-string model. The bass sits rock-solid in our hands, yet easy on the shoulder and features a maple board with a swamp ash body, Alien preamp and Hipshot hardware. We're a little intimidated at first by the six-knob panel, but it seems that no matter how the controls are configured, we are unable to get a bad sound out of this bass. With a few quick twists on the fly we're able to shape the sound from the growl of a classic P-Bass to the smooth hollow body thump of a Gibson E-335. There's a switch that changes the tone from vintage to boutique with



a 10k boost, and the master has a pull overdrive that offers a bit of hair on the dog without drowning in fuzz.

"Jack Bruce through a Marshall stack at Wembley Stadium," Joyce says with a laugh. "That's what I wanted it to sound like." Jack Bruce at Wembley, you say? Sure enough, we're able to take a ride from 'Sunshine Of Your Love' straight into 'Rapper's Delight' and even a hit a few licks from *Bitches Brew*, all with a few simple rolls of the dial.

The afternoon is flying by with so much great gear and so little time. We demo the JHS Colour Box pedal, an homage to the Neve soundboard from Abbey Road studios. At a retail cost upwards of £200, it's not for the frugal player but it definitely gives our bass that classic Abbey 'smashed' sound. Get on back, Jojo.

After a pleasant jaunt down Penny Lane, we stop by the Hartke booth to hear the blend of paper warmth and aluminum attack on their 2014 HD50 Bass Combo with HyDrive Hybrid Cones. It's punchy to the point that we impulsively prop our foot on the amp and gallop right into 'Run To The Hills'. A Hartke rep in sensible tan slacks and a navy blue suit jacket tightens his necktie and shoots us anxious looks. We fear he might be about to fetch security, but somewhere near the chorus he breaks into a smile and gives us two enthusiastic thumbs-up.

Just like that, it's 6pm and Summer NAMM is coming to a close. We slip out the showroom side door and head down Nashville's infamous neon-lit Lower Broad, where the music never stops. Passing Tootsie's Orchid Lounge, we spot a skinny cowboy in a straw hat standing on the side of an ancient Gibson upright, slapping that bass like it owes his mother money. Ladies and gentlemen, welcome to Nashville, Tennessee. ■

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Phronesis, featuring bassist Jasper Høiby

LOVE SUPREME JAZZ FESTIVAL AT GLYNDE PLACE IN SUSSEX IS THE PLACE TO GO FOR JAZZ BASS, DADDIO. MIKE FLYNN FEELS THE GROOVE

ONE LOVE

Jazz's natural habitat is usually that of a subterranean club, back bar, cosy club or high-end concert hall, but rarely a field in the middle of the countryside. So it was with some relief, not least from the organisers, that the first Love Supreme festival last year was blessed with both exceptional weather and an equally warm reception from the 15,000 or so punters who supported its first run. With numbers up 50% this year, the inaugural run inspired far more to attend this time around and, like any festival worth its salt, Love Supreme proved its all-weather-worthiness too, shaking off some rain to eventually bask in hot sunshine.

The intelligently selected line-up's canny mix of mainstream names such as Laura Mvula, Soul II Soul, Incognito and Jamie Cullum, once again reached out to the wider public, yet encircled these softer options with the cream of the current UK and US jazz artists performing all day and night in the Ronnie Scott's Big Top and Arena tents. So while the core jazz audience could enjoy the edgy sounds of Polar Bear, Laura Jurd Quartet and Mammal Hands, less specialist listeners were able to discover something outside the main stage comfort zone too. To emphasise the event's growing sense of confidence, the small garrison-like Matua Sessions Stage brought some of that fabled jazz club ambience to this idyllic greenfield setting, with its blend of cool jazz, funk and crossover jazz sounds on the Saturday and blues and rock following on the Sunday.

Readers of this magazine were extremely well catered for too, as a slew of top-notch bassists either filled the ranks of the massed bands, or indeed led them across a wide spectrum of styles. The first of

these to draw musical blood was Snarky Puppy – the US 10-piece fusion funksters – who, thanks to their complex yet catchy instrumental approach, continue to win a global following that would be the envy of most modern pop or rock bands. Having wowed the inaugural Love Supreme fest with a blasting set in the Big Top last year, they brought their über-hip Brooklyn sounds to the main stage this year, opening with their now anthemic tune 'Thing Of Gold'. Bandleader and bassist Michael League has the knack of weaving together slippery bass-lines that move the booty as much as the brain. In a band full of potential stars, it was perhaps apt that League's British keyboard wingman Bill Laurance – a fellow founding member of the 10-year-old band – was seated at the front of the stage, offering his classically-informed solos a chance to shine but also to deliver a tune from his recently-issued debut solo album, *Flint*. The tune in question, 'Ready Wednesday', is an urgent slab of Latin-infected funk-house that has League's bass-lines leaping all over the shop. Elsewhere it was the powerful Arabic-rock of 'Shofukan' that had the crowd singing their hearts out.

An interesting sound clash began to boil up late on Saturday afternoon between the Arena and Big Top, as two left-field crews wound up their contrasting styles. In the US corner was bassist Derrick Hodge, best known as a long-serving sideman to Grammy-winning piano star Robert Glasper, but who is now emerging as a solo artist with his own electro-fusion quartet. In the UK corner, further down the field, were mad jazz moshers Melt Yourself Down, the latest band to be fronted by sax terroriser Pete Wareham, of Acoustic Ladyland and Polar Bear fame. Joined here by fellow sax don Shabaka Hutchings, their molten mix of post-Pigbag sax riffs, global grooves and punk-funk bass-lines – authoritatively served up by *BGM* writer Ruth Goller – this band are reaching the parts Wareham's now defunct Acoustic Ladyland failed to reach. It's hot, sweaty stuff offering, a welcome blast of power riffing in place of more considered stuff – perfect if you're in the mood.

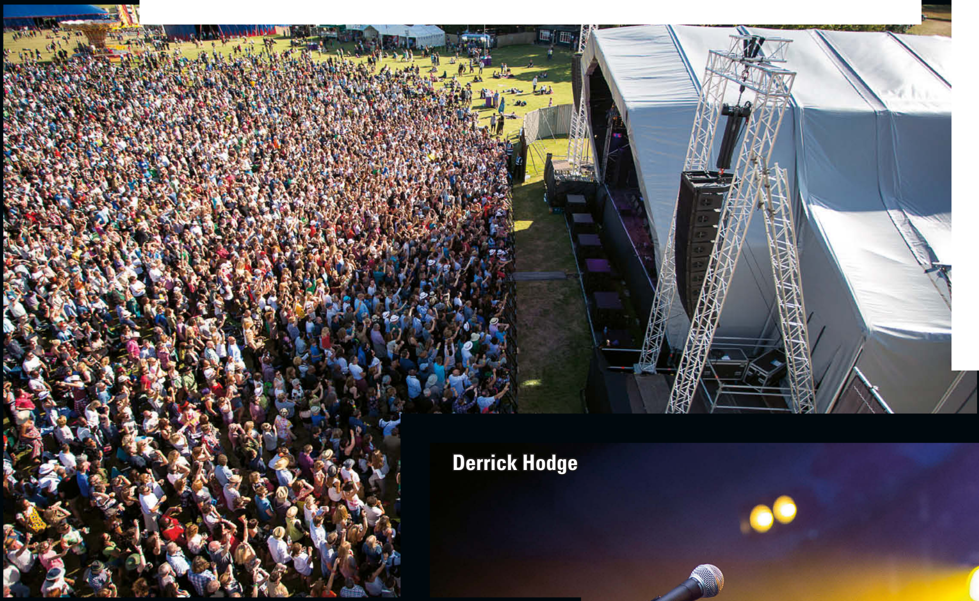
Hodge, meanwhile, proved that the slow burn can be as effective, as he wound up a set heavy on lead bass in a slightly more hip-hop fusion take on what a certain Mr Thundercat is doing right now. Hodge utilised some heavily phased and distorted sounds to cut through the layers of synths and sub bass, with some exceptional drumming from Mike Mitchell offering a dazzling rhythmic dimension to his heady sound world.

If UK and US bass players had been representing the fusion and rock-edged side of contemporary jazz so far, then it was the turn of Danish bass don Jasper Høiby and his unstoppable trio Phronesis to prove that more Eurocentric sounds can be just as intense. Joined by his two long-standing compadres – English pianist Ivo Neame and Swedish-Norwegian drummer Anton Eger – the acoustic power trio dug deep into rhythmically charged material from their latest album, *Life To Everything*. Høiby's darting bass-lines often form the core of each tune, yet it's the trio's chemistry that make them so special as complex time signatures are devoured with breathtaking abandon. With the lightning reflexes of Eger's beats chasing down Neame's solo flights, Jasper hits the bass jugular with surgical precision. The feverish shouts for an encore left the band a little speechless, but it was well deserved.

The Love Supreme festival then featured former Miles Davis bass legend Dave Holland and his band Prism – who delivered a mesmerising set in the Big Top. Having been on the road for the last year, with one self-titled album to their name, this is a super-charged four-piece hitting their stride. While Prism at times recalls the scorching improv-fuelled jazz-rock of Miles' *Bitches Brew*, there's a heavy blues quota to the band's sound too.

Sunday's line-up pulled no punches either: charismatic US bass boss Christian McBride and his modern jazz piano trio put on a show worthy of their penultimate billing in the Big Top, before soul-jazz vocal colossus Gregory Porter headlined the venue with a rip-roaring set played out to a now-overflowing tent.

With most mainstream festivals, including the once oh-so-alternative Glastonbury, shunning the vibrancy of today's scene, with scarcely a jazz-related name included on their bills, Love Supreme is proof that this music has both depth of talent – and serious pulling power. ■



Derrick Hodge

Dave Holland with Prism

CROP C

LAMB BASSIST JON THORNE REPORTS FROM THE VENERABLE CROPREDY FESTIVAL, WHERE HE MEETS DAVE PEGG, DANNY THOMPSON AND OTHER LEGENDARY LOW-ENDERS OF THE FOLK-ROCK PERSUASION

Fairport Convention's Cropredy Convention is that rare thing: a music festival run by musicians for music lovers, without a corporation in sight (or on site). It is the UK's largest festival of its kind at 20,000 punters and is now impressively in its 35th year. It offers a uniquely friendly atmosphere that pervades every aspect of the event, from the backstage crew to the ice-cream sellers. There's a genuine sense of family, because it remains centrally involved with the village it has grown in, through a variety of fundraising and communal efforts. With Cropredy's focus purely on one stage and a single bar, it also allows the bass enthusiast a chance to get a pitch at the beginning of the day, sit back and enjoy the rich array of different players on display.

Central to the proceedings is Dave Pegg, Fairport Convention's genial bassist, a colourful character whose melody-infused playing affords him an important place in the folk-rock musical canon. He came from the 1960s rock scene in Birmingham that included Led Zeppelin's Robert Plant and John Bonham, the latter of whom he was in a band with. Like many musicians of the time, he started as a guitarist before moving to bass.

"The first bass I bought was a 1962 Precision from the Uglys' bassist," recalls Dave. "I used it on all the sessions that really stood out for me, like Nick Drake's *Bryter Later* and my first Jethro Tull album. I had it signed by Leo Fender on the headstock with a wood engraver. I've been using Ibanez basses now for a long time: it's currently an SDR five-string, which is the best bass I've ever had. It's incredibly comfortable: I just leave the EQ flat and use the volume knob. Being an ex-guitar player I mainly use a pick. I've never been a flashy player, but I had a background playing jigs and reels – and on a tune like Fairport's 'Dirty Linen' I took the melody on the bass. People said it was innovative, but I only did it as I couldn't think of anything else to play."

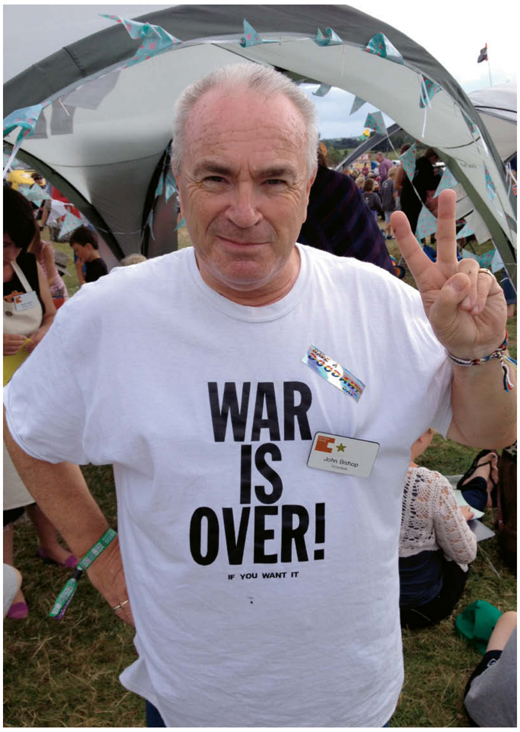
IRCLES

"Making the song sound good is absolutely what bass is all about," continues Dave. He talks fondly of the drummers he has shared the stage with, including Cozy Powell, Dave Mattacks, Gerry Conway and Mark Craney. "They all worshipped Bonham: he was the best drummer I ever played with, with the sound of the kit and his attack. He was so loud: whenever we got booked, his bass drum sounded like a cannon going off."

Dave's son Matthew joins us. He's a fingerstyle bassist who deputised for his father last winter when injury prevented Dave doing the Fairport tour. He currently plays with Procol Harum and Rick Wakeman. "The sound for me is all in the fingers," he tells us. "I also play with the thumb: it blends well with shows involving orchestras and choirs, and there's loads of sustain as well."

Dave has a central ethos for the festival, saying: "The idea behind Cropredy is to have an eclectic choice of music where we pick the acts ourselves, for the audience: bands with an identity." The three-day event is indeed immensely diverse, from the progressive rock of the Australian Pink Floyd and Marillion, through the wonderful folk-meets-funk mix of the Churchfitters, whose bassist plays an upright made from a saucepan, to the pure musical beauty of the Mischa Macpherson Trio, voted best newcomer at the BBC Folk Awards 2014 – the winner of which is offered a slot here every year.

Danny Thompson, legendary British double bassist, attends the event annually. "Fairport and I were always great mates," he says. "We used to hang out on the road and I used to come to this festival with John Martyn, Ralph MacTell, Richard Thompson and others and everyone was always able to enjoy the music among genuine music lovers. I've sat on the top of the hill here all these years and watched my grandchildren grow every year; it's all about friends and family coming together."



Danny imparts some pearls of wisdom about session recording during our conversation. "Forget what you want to do: serve the piece of music in front of you. Don't have an opinion; the only one that matters belongs to the person making the record. The songs have been living inside them for years and it's their moment. I get immense joy from being there and serving their material, hopefully in the right way. I don't presume to know the right way: I'm there as a tool to help them achieve what they want to achieve. You can bring your own ideas if that's asked for, and sometimes you can add a lot, which is nice, without bringing any destructive or negative elements. If I only have to bring one note, I'll do that, and I'll find different ways of playing that one note. The beauty of music is in the simple things that say everything. Bass is about time, intonation and tone."

Back on stage, Steve Hackett's Genesis Extended features the rich bass skills of *BGM* contributor Nick Beggs, who negotiates some of the trickier songs from the Genesis back catalogue with aplomb and finesse. The literary-infused Celtic rock of the Waterboys benefits greatly from the low-end growl and feistiness of Mark Arciero, who anchors the entire gig with precision and swagger. Meanwhile, Chris Spencer provides flawless bass for the sonic spine of the impressive Travelling Band from Manchester. Running a Fender Precision straight into a Marshall Superbass Head, his resolutely non-demonstrative, rock solid lines add warmth and steel to the group sound, constantly elevating the songs.

Chris is also the band's technician, a sound engineer and a budding luthier. "For the new album *The Big Defreeze*, I borrowed a Rickenbacker 4001 for some tracks for that 'bite' – full fat! Top of my shopping list is a Guild 301. Live, it's my job to underpin everything: I play as late as I can be without being wrong, giving the band space to express themselves."

This is the band's second appearance here, a rarity. "This is a one-of-a-kind festival, with proper music fans. Gigs like this make all the hard times worth it," he says, adding that the Travelling Band's independence and complete control over their career has been hard-won. "You just have to keep going, there's no easy answers. Put the effort in, stick together as a band and keep on making your music."

Dave Peacock brings his wealth of experience to Chas & Dave, driving the set with full tone and complete assurance. The rich sound of his picked 1960s Fender Precision fills all four corners of the field, while the band provides the best singalong moments of the festival. Fairport Convention round out the three days with a relaxed set imbued with the community spirit that has pervaded the entire occasion. Pegg's penchant for melody is immediately on display, weaving lush melodic counterpoints through classic songs like 'Who Knows Where The Time Goes'. Their set finishes in traditional style with one of their best-loved tunes, 'Meet On The Ledge'. Pegg, the festival organisers and the Fairporters in the audience have forged a unique musical niche, a place where a mix of family values, friendship and passion for music provide the perfect blend for an outdoor music festival.

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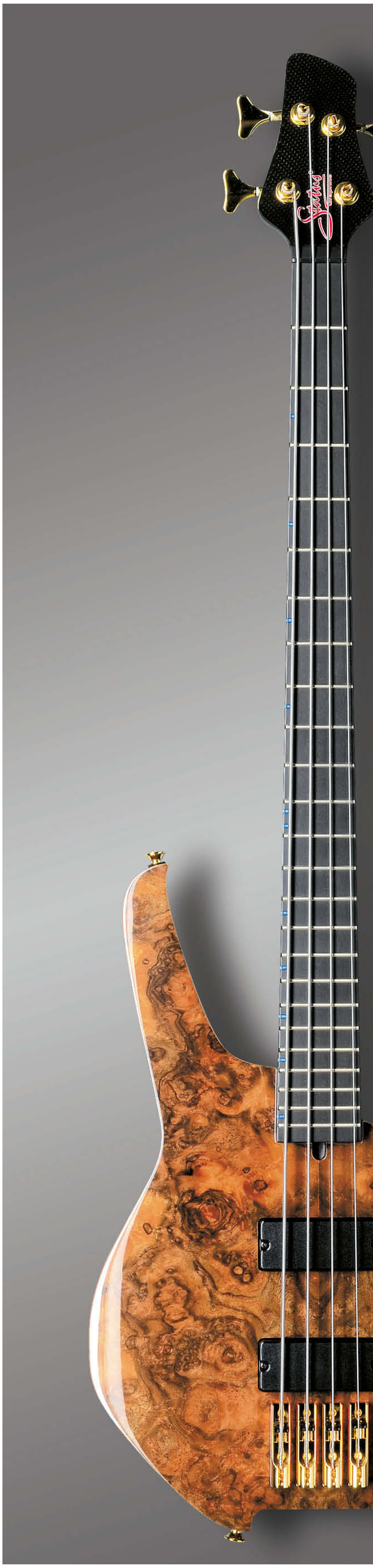
STATUS
SERIES 3

BGM HAS BEEN GIVEN FIRST REVIEW OF THIS BRAND-NEW PAIR OF STATUS SYMBOLS AND MIKE BROOKS WAS HANDED THE TASK. READ ON FOR A WORLD EXCLUSIVE!



Status Graphite
www.status-graphite.com, www.statii.com

Despite the introduction of new models, new body shapes and new circuitry, Status's Series II is still considered the veteran British company's classic bass, with vintage models currently commanding high asking prices. The three-band EQ-equipped Empathy model superseded the Series II in 1991, which then became the S2-Classic in the late 1990s, and while the various Kingbass incarnations have flown the flag for Status since 2001, the S2-Classic is still extremely popular, with its crisp bodylines and sharp styling. Never a company to rest on their laurels, Rob Green and the team at Status have set about the task of taking this classic bass to the next level. Ladies and gentlemen, we give you the four- and five-string Series 3...

BUILD QUALITY

The Series 3 (the S3, as we'll call it) is a culmination of all the Status models; the company is now more of a custom shop catering for customer requirements within the Status product framework, as all the permutations of hardware, electronics, styling and finishing can be interchanged. The S3 fuses the fanciest elements and broadest tonal spectrum into one model, and these are the first examples.

Opening the Hiscox cases, I felt like I'd received some early Christmas presents – although they aren't for my personal enjoyment, unfortunately. I had expected something special, and I wasn't disappointed. The headed four-string features a sumptuous burr walnut facing, almost a marbled chocolate effect, on a two-piece American walnut body core. The contrasting brown tones and hues are impressive. The classic angular Status body shape has been retained, but the body now features an arch top and faux alder binding between the top and body core. I quickly noticed that the contouring and chamfering have been reduced, but the arch top works well and the body facing no longer rounds itself over the side of the body. Instead of the usual chamfer, there is a sharper body edge, which facilitates the faux binding, and makes the elegant lines stand out. A few simple line changes and design cuts have brought a classic shape bang up to date.

The moulded graphite neck features a dual action truss rod, a feature Rob has been incorporating for some time. Although neck tints are available upon request, this neck features the natural graphite weave. The neck looks like a set-neck join, but Rob explained that the neck actually reaches all the way up to the bridge pickup. The graphite is

"THE SERIES II WAS A GENRE-DEFINING BASS, AND THE SERIES 3 REFINES ITS PREDECESSOR'S FEATURES AND VISUALS WITH GREAT TASTE"

moulded into the body during construction, while the front facing is bonded onto the body in a vacuum press. The angle of the neck and fingerboard are uniquely set on each instrument, with the phenolic fingerboard being skimmed perfectly flat, all of which takes time and precision to get right. On this bass, there is no string retainer or zero fret, and the frets have been dressed meticulously with no sharp edges whatsoever: the overall setup is wonderful. Furnished with a graphite through-neck, the S3's setup and action can be adjusted to the player's liking with relative ease: it remains extremely stable with virtually no movement, so no matter which string gauge you prefer, either bass won't present the player with any problems in that department.

The four-string model comes with a 19mm string spacing and a 42mm width at the nut, but this is compensated for by the slim dimensions across the whole length of the neck: think of a slim 'D' profile and you're almost there. The deep body cutaways make access to the upper frets remarkably easy. This bass has been fitted with blue wraparound LEDs along and over the top fingerboard edge, offering the necessary visual reference for the player and a little bling for the audience too. There are also white side markers but no front facing markers. This bass comes furnished with gold hardware throughout: the tuners feel solid and hold the tuning well, the controls turn smoothly and the bass comes fitted with the customary twin strap buttons at the bridge end of the body, offering the player a choice of playing angle.

The five-string bass is fairly similar in most departments, although this bass comes with black hardware: being headless, the player can choose to use double ball end strings or regular strings which can be cut to length and retained using the supplied grub screws. The body dimensions are identical to the four-string instrument, although mahogany has been used as the core wood. The aqua blue stained masur birch top is pleasing and the body looks slimmer than the older style Series II and Empathy body shapes, no doubt accentuated by the sharp-edged, precision-cut look. The gloss finish on both basses really shows off the timbers and from personal experience, it will offer the instrument extra protection from knocks and dings over time.

With a 34-inch scale, the dimensions of this five-string neck feel comfortable and although the fingerboard looks and feels quite broad, the 18mm string spacing, 47mm nut width and slim rear neck profile and depth shouldn't cause any fingering problems. This bass also has wraparound LEDs (the front LEDs can be turned off), white in this instance, with an additional set of LEDs in the lower front facing of the fingerboard. All of

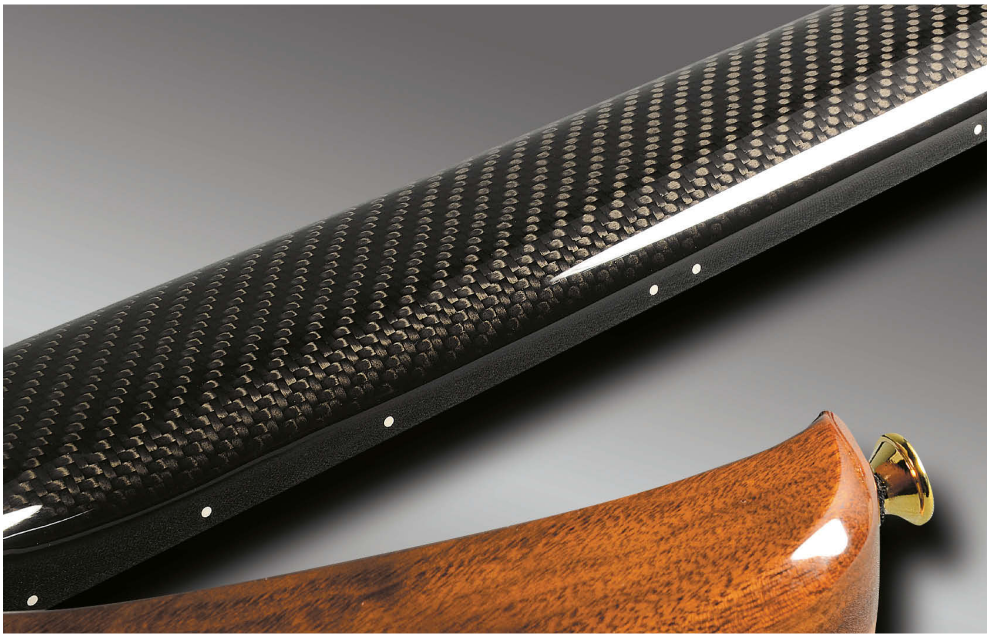
this requires two 9-volt batteries, although the four-string requires only a single battery. Both basses require two batteries for their 18-volt circuitry.

Both basses feature the same control set (volume, pan, three-band EQ with variable mid), and a quick look inside both control cavities show them both to be well shielded and neat and tidy, completed by the fact that all of the battery compartments use flip-top battery holders. The marrying of timber and graphite has always been an impressive combination, both in terms of looks and tonal performance, and these basses well and truly continue that tradition.

PLAYABILITY AND SOUNDS

Both basses balance well: the headed four-string exhibits a little headstock bias, but this disappears when placed on a strap. The five-string benefits from its headless construction: with no headstock to contend with, and the increased bulk of the five-string, the neck was easily adjusted to. Acoustically, both basses sound vibrant, resonant and punchy with plenty of spring, no doubt helped by the fresh strings and the individual bridge units that improve the overall sustain.

Plugging in and panning around the pickups of both basses shows just how much tonal quality these instruments have, and the proof is in the pedigree. Straight away, the five-string exhibits some fretless slither to its basic tonal character: coaxing a degree of 'mwah' from



TECHNICAL SPECIFICATION

STATUS S3 HEADED 4
PRICE | £2,995 (inclusive of LEDs)
COLOUR | Natural (tobacco stain on rear facing)
BODY | American walnut (two-piece) core with burr walnut / alder facing
NECK | Woven graphite moulded through-neck
FINGERBOARD | Phenolic
PICKUPS | Status humbucking soapbar pickups x 2
ELECTRONICS | 18-volt active, 3-band EQ (303 circuit)
CONTROLS | Volume, pickup pan, bass boost/cut, treble boost/cut, mid-range frequency (300Hz – 1.5kHz +/- 6dB cut and boost), mid flat/cut/boost switch
TUNERS | Status enclosed tuners, Schaller-style
BRIDGE | Status monorail, two-way adjustable
MADE IN | UK
NUT WIDTH | 42mm
NECK JOIN | Through-neck
SCALE LENGTH | 34" (864mm)
FRETS | 24
WEIGHT | 4kg (8lb 8oz)
CASE/GIG BAG INCLUDED | Hard case
LEFT HAND MODEL AVAILABLE | Yes

WHAT WE THINK

PLUS | A high quality instrument that deliver on all levels, capable of a wide variety of tones, built to last and extremely reliable. Extremely playable, great looks, an all-round great bass
MINUS | At a snip under £3,000, it isn't cheap – but you get what you pay for
OVERALL | As an example of the new range, consider your own preferences as all of the elements can be modified to suit the individual. A seriously great bass.

BGM RATING

BUILD QUALITY	★★★★★★★★★★ (10/10)
SOUND QUALITY	★★★★★★★★★☆ (9/10)
VALUE	★★★★★★★★★☆ (9/10)

it is fairly straightforward should you want it. The 34-inch scale does make the low B-string feel a little baggy and overly supple, but the circuit more than compensates for this and the instrument's delivery is still tight and ballsy with plenty of power and grunt. The mid frequencies on offer really make a difference, especially with how you want the low B-string to perform, whether you want some definition and throatiness, some extra clatter and presence or some extra power to the bottom end. It's all here.

Both basses display a different tonal performance, as indeed they should: no two basses sound exactly alike. However, the Status character is there, determined by the neck and timbers, the circuitry and the pickups. The four-string feels incredibly slinky to play and in turn, this affects how you approach playing it. A Status newbie might be initially intimidated by the response and delivery powered by the circuit, but the scale, comfort and playability urge you to get stuck in: both of these basses have these admirable qualities.

Experimenting with the circuit reveals a diverse range of tones: both basses are fully equipped to deal with any style of playing or musical genre you wish to apply. Playing at home, both basses display clarity, power and a broad dynamic character, but it's not until you take them out and put them into a band mix that their real functionality and high level of performance becomes apparent. The clarity that makes every string stand out at home contributes to their ability to position themselves perfectly in a band mix, underpinning the band but offering enough projection and dynamics to add some sizzle and bounce to the bottom end.

CONCLUSIONS

Both of these basses exude quality craftsmanship, class and finesse. Although the price tags are high, it is readily evident where your money is going, and bear in mind that the LEDs are included in the price. The Series II was a genre-defining bass, and the Series 3 refines its predecessor's features and visuals with great taste. Tonally, it's not all twang and glassy treble: its top end complements the solid bottom end and mid-range fundamental with which the basses are blessed. Status basses have always been something to aspire to, and that hasn't changed. Quality costs, and is worth paying for.

TECHNICAL SPECIFICATION

PRICE | £3,475 (inclusive of LEDs and stained top)
COLOUR | Aqua blue stain (front facing), amber stain (rear facing)
BODY | Mahogany (two-piece) core with masur birch / alder facing
NECK | Woven graphite moulded through-neck
FINGERBOARD | Phenolic
PICKUPS | Status humbucking soapbar pickups x 2
ELECTRONICS | 18-volt active, 3-band EQ (303 circuit)
CONTROLS | Volume, pickup pan, bass boost/cut, treble boost/cut, mid-range frequency (300Hz – 1.5kHz +/- 6dB cut and boost), mid flat/cut/boost switch
BRIDGE | Status monorail, two-way adjustable
MADE IN | UK
NUT WIDTH | 47mm
NECK JOIN | Through-neck
SCALE LENGTH | 34" (864mm)
FRETS | 24
WEIGHT | 4kg (8lb 8oz)
CASE/GIG BAG INCLUDED | Hard case
LEFT HAND MODEL AVAILABLE | Yes

WHAT WE THINK

PLUS | A great-to-play five-string bass that works on every level: the headless design has more than proved itself and the tonal flexibility makes this a bass worthy of the price tag
MINUS | A serious investment: headless basses don't work for some players
OVERALL | The S3 is a worthy update of the Status line and if you can justify the price tag you will be rewarded with a bass of immense quality, craftsmanship and tone

BGM RATING

BUILD QUALITY	★★★★★★★★★★
SOUND QUALITY	★★★★★★★★★☆
VALUE	★★★★★★★★☆☆

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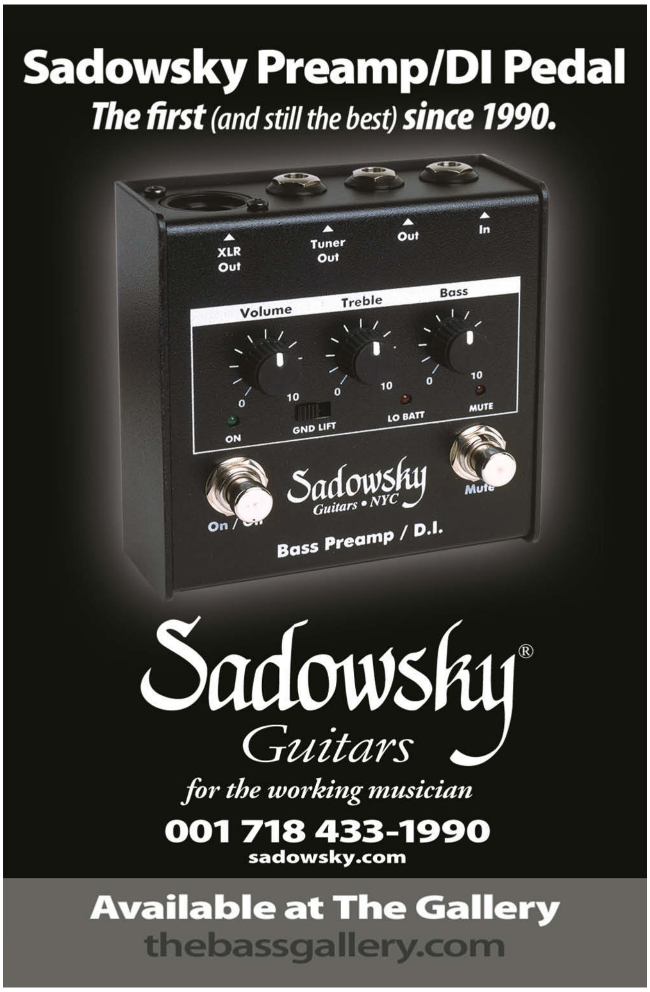
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SUNN
Coliseum

CHRIS RECALLS THE DAWN OF THE SUNN COLISEUM IN 1970

Most of the amps we've covered in these articles have been well-known vintage classics that are often lauded as Holy Grail rigs. Most would set you back an arm and a leg and have been reissued or copied endlessly due to their vintage appeal. This month we look at a company that has long since disappeared, but in the late 1960s had cornered the market. They're as rare as the proverbial hen's teeth – and pretty much forgotten by all but those who have played or owned them.

The story begins with Portland, Oregon-based band the Kingsmen. Their anthem 'Louie Louie' saw them hit the top of the US charts in 1963. As their success grew, so did their audiences. Their bassist Norm Sundholm soon found that his usual amplifiers lacked the power they needed to cope with huge concert halls and asked his electronics enthusiast brother Conrad to help him design a new high-powered bass amp. Conrad soon created a prototype and set up business under the name Sunn, building the amps in a modest garage. Word spread quickly and it wasn't long before he had heavyweight musicians such as Jimi Hendrix, the Rolling Stones, the Who and many others playing Sunn equipment. Sunn also supplied amplification for the whole Woodstock festival, a testament to their success.

The Coliseum head first appeared in the 1970 catalogue. It featured two channels and five simple controls: Lo Bass 20-80Hz, High Bass 80-250Hz, Mid 250Hz-1Khz, Treble 1-10KHz and a master volume. There were also tone range switches for the mid and treble controls and a Norm/Brite switch for the input. The Coliseum was fully solid state, boasted an output of 320 watts at 2 ohms and was built to power a pair of 1x18" bass reflex cabinets.

Sunn developed many amps during the early period, from lower-powered combos to high-gain valve juggernauts, all with a range of cabinets. Despite the great success of Sunn amplifiers, both of the Sundholm brothers had sold their stakes in the company by 1972. These earlier, pre-1972 units are the most sought after by collectors. It was just after the brothers split from the company that Sunn launched the 150 watt Concert Bass Head, another solid state amp, and the all-valve 150 watt Model T Bass. Both found a great deal of success with bassists due to their build quality and tone.

Under new management from the Hartzel Company, Sunn continued to produce amplifiers into the '80s. In 1982, an undated version of the Coliseum was added to the line. The Coliseum 300 was a 300-watt solid-state head with an expanded EQ section, separate gain and master volume controls, frequency selectable crossover and on-board compressor. Sunn's grip on the market began to slip when, driven by the popularity of rock and metal acts, Marshall stacks began to dominate arena stages. Their popularity began to slowly fade and, after the president of Hartzel died in a plane crash, the family gave up on the Sunn brand.

The name was eventually sold to Fender in 1985, themselves under financial strain themselves at the time. Little was done with the Sunn brand, save for releasing a new version of the Model T and the 300 T. The Model T was all-valve and could be switched between a Club (25 watts) and Arena (100 watts) settings. The 300 T was also all-valve but put out a full 300 watts. It is a beast of an amplifier, featuring separate clean and distortion channels, a dual band compressor and a 10 band graphic EQ as well as a myriad of rear connectors such as effects loop and XLR outs. The 300 T was later rebranded as the Fender Bassman 300: it was identical to the 300 T and is still widely regarded as a serious arena-worthy amplifier. Fender still owns the Sunn name and uses it for its PA equipment and lighting departments.

Chris has amassed a staggering amount of insightful, interesting and sometimes irrelevant information on bass guitar equipment during his career as a professional bassist. So we continue to push electronics and bass amps under his nose and make him report to us on his favourites.

CHRIS HANBY @CHanbyEFX

BASS COLLECTION
SPEAKEASY 4 AND 5

HIGH QUALITY AT AFFORDABLE PRICES? THE BASS CENTRE TRIUMPHS AGAIN, SAYS IAN GLASPER

Bass Centre
www.basscentre.com

With 30 years of experience to bring to bear, satisfying both the legends of British bass playing and the thousands of punters that have poured through their doors since their Wapping shop launched way back in 1984, the London Bass Centre can always be trusted to bring tight quality control and unrivalled value for money to all of its own-brand products. The new Speakeasy range is no exception, seeing a welcome rebirth of the SB ('small bodied') series, which was one of their most popular lines during the late 1980s and early 1990s.

BUILD QUALITY

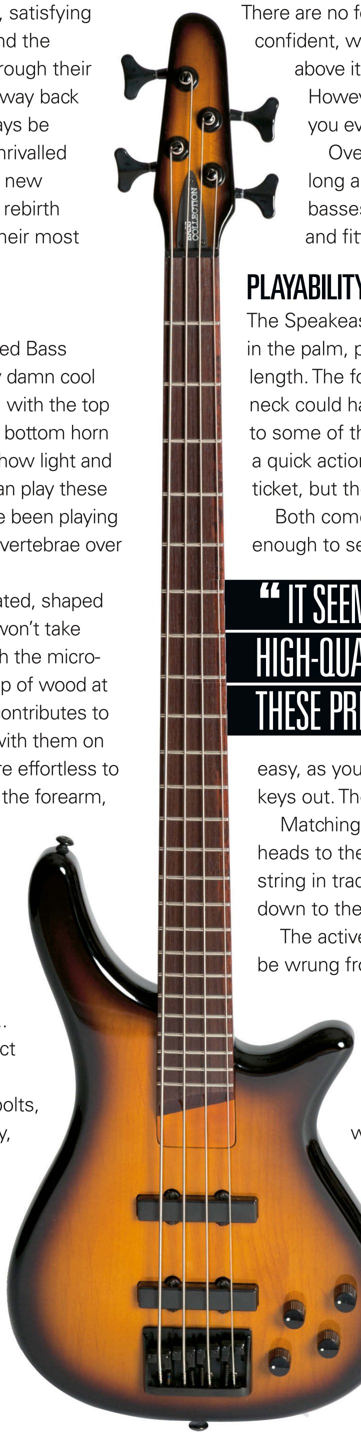
Pull these new basses from the comfort of their padded Bass Centre gig bags and the first thing you'll notice is how damn cool they look. They're economically sized and super sleek, with the top horn seemingly flowing through the neck and into the bottom horn in one compelling sweep. Secondly, you'll appreciate how light and balanced they feel, an ergonomic dream in fact. You can play these elegant beauties for hours and not really realise you've been playing them, unlike many a slab I've had play havoc with my vertebrae over the years.

The headstock is another talking point. It's understated, shaped a bit like a Tic-Tac, and as well as being practical (you won't take your singer's head off with it) it's totally in keeping with the micro-aesthetic elsewhere. The absence of any sizeable lump of wood at the end of the neck offsets the downsized body and contributes to the Speakeasy's delectable balance. Whether sitting with them on your lap, or slinging them from a strap, both basses are effortless to wield and willing to yield, their rounded edges kind to the forearm, and their chamfered bodies kind to the floating rib.

With the four-string in lustrous 'King Crimson', and the five-string in 'Jet Black', both guitars have been finished with a minimalist flourish. Your reviewer particularly liked the King Crimson, not because of any particular prog leanings, but because it's the same stunning hue as an old guitar once owned that sadly got defaced by a marker pen skull... but that's another story. Just don't look at this in direct sunlight, unless you want a glare migraine.

The necks are firmly fixed with four countersunk bolts, and have an extension into the body for extra stability, which you'll hardly notice because of the neat paint-job and joinery. The generous lower horn cutaway, along with the heel-less neck, makes even the highest notes readily accessible.

The headstock is primed with four closed-gear Gotohesque tuners, neatly back-angled to subtly continue that dynamic design flow, and needless to say they presented no tuning issues whatsoever during the review trial.



There are no forward-facing inlays on the neck, which adds to the confident, workmanlike vibe of the instrument, which definitely punches above its weight in the looks department in this price bracket. However, there are discreet side dots for your reference, should you ever lose your way in the heat of the moment.

Overall, with regard to build, you're going to have to search long and hard to find anything that niggles you with these basses. Both are solid and sinewy for their size, and boast joints and fittings as tight as their lines.

PLAYABILITY AND SOUNDS

The Speakeasy neck is low profile, and wonderfully soft and smooth in the palm, promoting some speedy manoeuvres up and down its length. The four-string handles like a dream, and while the five-string neck could have been a little narrower, it's still child's play compared to some of the dual carriageways I've battled over a chord with. If it's a quick action you look for in a bass, these will definitely punch your ticket, but the four-string edges it for fretboard dynamism.

Both come equipped with a dual-action truss rod, if you're brave enough to set up your basses yourself... but the Bass Centre can rest easy, as your intrepid reviewer felt absolutely no need to get the Allen keys out. The set-up on the trial models was dreamy already.

> **"IT SEEMS CHURLISH TO TRY AND CRITICISE SUCH HIGH-QUALITY GUITARS WHEN THEY'RE AVAILABLE AT THESE PRICES"**

Matching hardware throughout on each bass, from the machine heads to the chunky bridge, is always a welcome touch, with the four-string in traditionally tasteful chrome, and the five-string in gold, right down to the nut and the screws to the battery compartment.

The active electronics bring the EQ to life, allowing ample tones to be wrung from either bass. As the name suggests, the Speakeasys are lively sounding guitars, with lots of zing to the upper ends, a dynamic snap to the mids and an evocative growl around the lower reaches. Played with a pick, both guitars gave up a tight responsive attack that was both gnarly and flattering; under the fingertips they were equally as pleasing to play, the pick-ups located sympathetically for those that like to rest their thumb on something while laying down their grooves.

The general vibe of the instruments should suit enthusiastic slappers out there as well as rockers: the pickups can certainly handle the rough stuff, with the high mass bridge ensuring powerful sustain for heavier moments.

Those pickups are the Bass Centre's own units from their awesomely-monikered Bass

Invader range, by the way, and with a switch to blend signals, as well as active bass and treble cut and boost, there's plenty of scope at your fingertips.The review models were more than adequately wired for sound with stainless steel Bass Centre Elite Stadium Series strings, and these certainly seemed to suit the guitars, although the five-string struggled a little with the low B to find the same quality and clarity of tone as the higher registers.

CONCLUSION

It seems churlish to try and criticise such high-quality guitars when they're available at these kind of prices, and you're going to have to search long and hard to get a similar bang for such modest buck anywhere else. They even throw in a Bass Collection gig bag, which is a nice touch and functional, well padded with enough straps and handles to carry your guitar whichever way you like, and enough storage pockets for leads, pedals and much more. And that Bass Centre logo always reminds me of my own playing style – all fingers and thumbs!

TECHNICAL SPECIFICATION

PRICE | £495 (four-string), £595 (five-string)
MADE IN | Korea
BODY WOOD | Ash
FINISH | King Crimson, Jet Black, Two-Tone, Windermere Blue, Walnut
NECK | 3-piece maple
FRETS | 24 jumbo
SCALE | 34"
FINGERBOARD | Rosewood
PICKUPS | Bass Centre Bass Invader
HARDWARE | Chrome (four-string), gold (five-string)
CONTROLS | Master volume, pickup blend, active bass cut/boost, active treble cut/boost

WHAT WE THINK

PLUS | Small and perfectly formed, these guitars are easy on both the eye and the ear
MINUS | Perhaps lacking some of the depth and richness of tone of a weightier, more expensive instrument, but that comes with the territory
OVERALL | Exceptionally well built and finished for the price tag – a joy to play

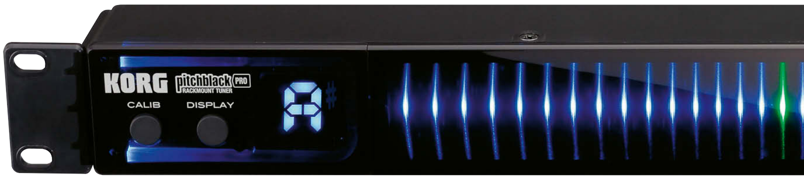
BGM RATING

BUILD QUALITY	★★★★★★★★☆☆
SOUND QUALITY	★★★★★★★☆☆☆
VALUE	★★★★★★★★★☆

REVIEWS
Roundup

BASS GUITAR REVIEWS? CHECK. AMP REVIEWS? WE GOT 'EM. TUNER, WIRELESS SYSTEM, DRIVE/DI BOX AND STRINGS? RIGHT HERE, ASSEMBLED, REVIEWED AND RATED BY JOEL MCIVER

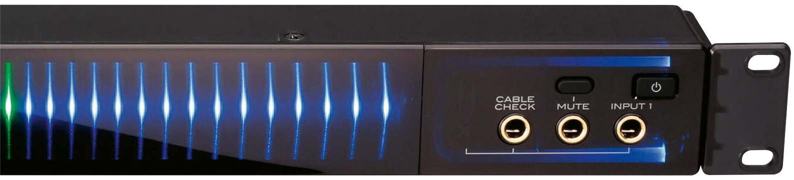
As you're a bass player, people will always have something to buy you for Christmas, even if you already have basses and amps cluttering up the place. All the other stuff counts just as much, so here we go, a couple of pages devoted to the rest of the gear that comes between your fingers and your amp...



First up, are you in tune? Maybe, maybe not. Sick of peering at a two-inch readout on a tuner pedal? If so, check out Korg's **Pitchblack Pro** 19-inch rackmountable tuner, a veritable beast of a unit at a wallet-friendly price. This long strip of plastic can sit anywhere you want – on your amp, in a rack (the fittings come in the box), on the floor, on a groupie's lap, wherever – and the blue strobes that the readout emits will still be visible. Essentially you plug in, taking advantage if you wish of the welcome 'cable check' feature that assesses your cables for breaks, choose one of three readout modes and hit a string. It'll recognise which string you've played and, depending on your choice of readout, display a green central light with blue strobes to right and left, showing you how out of tune you are. It's amazingly sensitive: you may spend quite a while getting it perfectly right. Cunningly, it will tell you if your intonation is off too, because you can tune up or down using any fret you like, and there's also a calibration function if you want to mess around with the 440Hz benchmark. Useful indeed for those darkened backstage moments.

Cables? Bah! All very well for rehearsal rooms and the weddings circuit, but when your band is playing the O2 Arena, you'll need to go wireless. Samson's new **Concert 88 UHF** wireless system has landed on our desks, so let's plug it in and pretend we're on a massive stage. Comprising two sections, the transmitter and receiver (well, duh), the Samson gives you eight hours of power using two AA batteries, or about half the time needed for a Grateful Dead drum solo. Plug your bass into the belt pack, clip it onto your jeans or whatever stage garb you're rocking today, and switch on. At the other end the dinky receiver, with its two antennae waving at you from atop your amp, is a pretty user-friendly gizmo, allowing (it says here) up to 16 systems to operate simultaneously across two frequency bands, with up to 300 feet separating the receiver and transmitter. Yes, you read that right: 300 feet. That should just about be enough for your band's gig at the local Dog & Duck tonight. Featuring an automute so that there isn't a giant blast of white noise if the signal drops out, the system allows you to sync the two halves via some cunning, *Star Trek*-style infrared technology. Apart from that, it's all about selecting the right channel and turning the volume up. Now all you have to do is remember your bass parts.

Moving swiftly on to the cheery-looking **Bassbone OD DI** from Radial Engineering, tweak it for half an hour or so and you'll be impressed by its versatility and usability for more or less anyone operating at the low end. Essentially it's a highly portable 2.5lb DI box with a cool overdrive facility and dual preamps – in other words the option of two sounds for a single bass, or two sounds for two separate basses. The overdrive is great: you can mix your dry and wet signal as you choose, and use the foot control to switch between the effects loop and the drive, or between clean and driven sounds. Each channel has the



obvious tone controls, allowing you the full range of colours – essential for switching between instruments, or to select solo or slap tones on or off. There's an adjustable PZB booster switch for piezo pickups, which double bass players will appreciate, and something called a drag control, which apparently optimises the tone if you're using a vintage passive instrument. You can send to your amp or to the PA, and there's a separate tuner output with a footswitch option. You can even attach an iOS device to play along with music. It's aimed at the professional, or at least semi-pro, musician or engineer, as there's no battery option (Radial Engineering warn that the Bassbone would suck any battery dry in a matter of minutes, such is its power) and its unnervingly precise ability to micromanage tones, but if that's you, dive in with our blessing.

Finally, you'll be needing some strings to make a racket with, and while there are several gazillion very worthy string brands on the market which we also recommend wholeheartedly, do have a think about Dunlop's new **Super Bright** range if you prefer a toppy sound. Zippy, crispy, glassy, crystalline – all these frankly inadequate words describe the treble-heavy performance of the Super Brights to a T. Available in light and medium gauges (presumably a way of making heavy-gauge strings sound super-toppy has not yet been invented), they make slapping, tapping and soloing that much easier. And that, friends, can only be a good thing.

TECHNICAL SPECIFICATION

SAMSON CONCERT 88 WIRELESS GUITAR SYSTEM
PRICE | £135 approx
FEATURES | 16-system simultaneous operation across two frequency bands with up to 300 feet separating receiver and transmitter, auto mute function, auto sync via infrared, 7-segment Channel LED, volume control, two tuned antennas, 2 x AA battery power, rackmount kit

BGM RATING OUT OF 10
8/10

CONTACT | www.samsontech.com

TECHNICAL SPECIFICATION

KORG PITCHBLACK PRO RACKMOUNT TUNER
PRICE | £79
FEATURES | Detection range E0 (20.60 Hz) to C8 (4186 Hz), Regular/Strobe/Half Strobe display modes, powered DC 9V or AC adapter, cable checker, mute, footswitch option

RATING OUT OF 10
8/10

CONTACT | www.korg.com

TECHNICAL SPECIFICATION

RADIAL ENGINEERING BASSBONE OD
PRICE | £305
FEATURES | Gain, Low, Mid and High on both channels plus Drive, Mix and Tone in overdrive section, Drag, Mute, AC adapter powered

BGM RATING OUT OF 10
9/10

CONTACT | www.tonebone.com

TECHNICAL SPECIFICATION

DUNLOP SUPERBRIGHT STRINGS
PRICE | £25

BGM RATING OUT OF 10
9/10

CONTACT | www.jimdunlop.com

ASHDOWN
MAG ROOTMASTER 420 AMP AND 210T CAB

THE BRITISH AMP LEGENDS LAUNCH A SPIFFING NEW RANGE – AND KEV SANDERS GETS STRAIGHT TO THE ROOT OF THE MATTER...

Ashdown Engineering
www.ashdownmusic.com

There's always a buzz of excitement among the bass community prior to the launch of a new Ashdown range. It's not surprising, either: here's a British company which has consistently produced some of the best bass amplification in the world. Models such as the ABM series amps have been available for over 15 years, steadily evolving and improving as the quality of their materials and components gets better and better. Ashdown are committed to constant improvement, but also believe in the quality of their initial designs – when we heard that the new Rootmaster-branded range was on the way, anticipation ran high.

BUILD QUALITY AND FEATURES MAG ROOTMASTER 420 AMP

Although the 420 is immediately recognisable as an Ashdown product, its stylish new look and much smaller dimensions mark it out as a different animal to the previous MAG amp. As we'll see, these differences are more than just skin deep. Ashdown amplifiers have always been well made and although they switched their manufacturing facility to China some time ago, the standard of materials and build are as good, if not better than they ever were. The amp is housed in a sturdy matte black steel case with four small rubber feet to allow air to circulate underneath and vent slots down one side. Cool air is drawn through these by the fan at the other end of the amp.

The front panel is deceptively simple. There's the trademark analogue VU meter on the left, then the main EQ controls running left to right on the top half. In a row under these are the main input and output. Also on this lower part is the line mix control which allows you to balance the signal from an MP3 player or phone (plugged into the 'line in' mini jack input on the back) to your bass's volume. A simple but clever compressor – which splits the bass signal and applies different amounts of compression to the low and high frequencies – is also controlled from the front, as are the drive and sub controls.

The drive does pretty much what you'd expect, adding a smooth, natural and valve-like overdrive, while the welcome return of the sub control (a feature previously seen on many Ashdown bass amps) allows the player to add frequencies an octave below the note being played. The EQ, compressor and drive each have on/off buttons and there's a 'shape' button to pre-set the EQ's starting point by scooping the mids. Round the back you have a stereo jack for a footswitch which enables you to turn the compressor and drive on and off, as well as the mini-jack line in, FX loop, XLR balanced line DI and single Speakon/Jack combined output.

> **"THIS SETUP WOULD BE IDEAL FOR ANY BASSIST LOOKING TO PROGRESS FROM A COMBO TO THEIR FIRST SERIOUS STAGE STACK"**

MAG ROOTMASTER 210T CAB

A compact and lightweight eight-ohm cab with two 10" drivers plus a horn is a brilliant format for bass guitar. You get a wide frequency response, in this case 60Hz right up to 20kHz, in a box that will normally fit into the boot of your car. Add another and you have a rig that will handle most gigging situations, and with a combined impedance of four ohms you also have the added benefit of coaxing the maximum bang from your amp.

This new 210T cab certainly looks the business, with its traditional matte black vinyl covering, black corner protectors and a tough black nylon grille. The single strap handle on top is well up to the job and you can easily lift it with one hand. Underneath are four chunky rubber feet.

Given the price, there are clearly areas where savings have had to be made, and perhaps the most obvious of these is the material from which the cabinet is constructed. Rather than the birch plywood used in the more expensive ranges, the MAG 210T is made from dense 18mm chipboard, with an internal 'front to back' brace of the same material. Inside, the two 10" baffle mounted speakers, despite having a pressed steel chassis, appear to be great quality, with large voice coils and magnets – not much sign of money saving there. The piezo horn tweeter does away with the need for an internal crossover, so the neat wiring is kept to a minimum. The back panel boasts two sockets, a combined Speakon/Jack and a single jack. These are wired in parallel so that you can 'daisy-chain' another eight-ohm cab with just a link lead.

SOUNDS

With the MAG 420 sat on top of the 210T, you have a neat and compact bass rig, and with the Ashdown name proudly displayed it looks business-like and professional. Switch on the amp, plug in and the first thing to strike you is the clarity and hi-fi-like quality of the tone. My previous experience of piezo tweeters led me to expect – incorrectly, as it turns out – a bit of a brittle-sounding top end. This is not the case here at all, and while the two 10" drivers do a great job of delivering a focused and controlled low end, it was the glassy transparency of the top frequencies that was immediately impressive.

PROMENADE MUSIC

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4 String Basses

breedlove

11818 - Breedlove BJ350/SMe4 Electro Acoustic
10067 - Brian May Bass in Cherry with Gig Bag
13305 - Cort B4 OPM (Open Pore Mahogany) Used
12807 - Cort Jeff Berlin Rithimic, Used

Fender

13365 - Fender American Dlx Dimension IV Cayenne
4219 - Fender American Deluxe Jazz, Sunburst
9083 - Fender Am Special Jazz Bass, Sunburst
9231 - Fender Am Standard Jazz Bass, Sunburst
13307 - Fender Marcus Miller Jazz Bass, White
12288 - Fender Mike Dirnt Road Worn Precision SB
13172 - Fender Modern Player Jazz Satin Sunburst
8113 - Fender Modern Player Available To Order
13370 - Fender Modern Player Short Scale Bass
13253 - Fender Road Worn 50's P Bass, Sunburst
12426 - Fender Standard Jazz Bass Brown Sunburst
12717 - Fender Standard Jazz Bass, Midnight Wine
13252 - Fender Starcaster J Bass, Black
13323 - Fender Sting Precision Bass, Sunburst
12895 - G&L Tribute L2000 4 String Bass Guitar
12894 - G&L Tribute L2000 4 String Bass Guitar
10997 - G&L Tribute SB2 4-String, Metallic Black

Gibson

9593 - Gibson Firebird Studio Reverse 70s Bass
12722 - Gibson Les Paul Bass, Heritage Cherry S/b
10074 - Gretsch G6073 Electrotone Bass, Burgundy
11189 - Hofner HCT Shorty Bass, Black
12218 - Hofner HCT Violin Bass Guitar in Blue
13328 - Hofner Violin Bass Ignition Black
12188 - Hofner Violin Bass Ignition Sunburst

LEVIN

6780 - Levin LB400, Redburst
8073 - Lodestone Primal Artist
8079 - Lodestone Primal Instinct P Bass, Green
8080 - Lodestone Primal Instinct Pbass Sunburst
8081 - Lodestone Primal Pro in Chignal Blue
8082 - Lodestone Primal Pro 4, Tobacco Sunburst
4175 - Marleaux B Votan 4, Black

MUSIC MAN

4781 - MusicMan Stingray 3EQ, True Gold
8250 - Musicman Sterling 4 String Bass, Blue
8997 - Musicman Sterling SB14 Bass, Sunburst

Overwater

8435 - Overwater Aspiration Std 4, Black Cherry
10962 - Overwater Inspiration 4, Blue Burst
9867 - Overwater Inspiration Jazz PJ 4 String
7890 - Rickenbacker 4003, Jetglo
12405 - Spector Bass Performer 4 String, Black
11197 - Spector Bass Performer 4, Red
13337 - Spector Coda Pro 4 Black Cherry Stain
4417 - Steinberger Spirit XT2 4 String Bass
13322 - Tanglewood Rebel Bass, Lefty, Used, Blk
13051 - Tobias Toby Deluxe IV Bass, Trans Amber

WestCoast

6446 - Westcoast BG4 Neck Thru Body, Brown
8437 - Westcoast JP1 4 String Bass in Trans Red

YAMAHA

10120 - Yamaha BB1024X 4 String, Caramel Brown
4649 - Yamaha BB2024X, Vintage White
6953 - Yamaha BB424, Vintage White
5634 - Yamaha BB714BS Billy Sheehan, Lava Red
9000 - Yamaha RBX170
10314 - Yamaha RBX170EW Bass
4331 - Yamaha TRB1004J, Trans Black
13390 - Yamaha TRBX174 4 String Bass, Black
10307 - Yamaha TRBX304 Bass
13137 - Yamaha TRBX304 Bass In Mist Green
13138 - Yamaha TRBX304 4 String Bass In White
13300 - Yamaha TRBX304 Bass, Black

5 String Basses

13264 - Bass Collection Portrait Fretless 5
10109 - Cort A5 5 String Bass, Open Pore Natural
12538 - Cort GB75 5 String Bass, Open Pore Nat.
11014 - Fender Jazz Bass 5 String
13117 - Fender Deluxe Dimension Bass V Natural
11066 - G&L Tribute L2500 5 String Natural Gloss
9702 - G&L Tribute L2500 5-String In Walnut
8174 - Lodestone Primal Pro 5, Chignal Blue
12198 - MusicMan Stingray 5 Honeyburst
13306 - MusicMan Stingray 5, Black
9002 - Overwater Aspiration Deluxe Bass, Black
9009 - Overwater Contemporary 5-String Bass
10963 - Overwater Inspiration 5, Red Burst
12561 - Peavey Millenium BXP 5-String Bass
10960 - Pedulla Rapture Fretted 5-String Bass
5121 - Rockbass Streamer LX5, Black
13204 - Sandberg California TM, Black, Used
11196 - Spector Bass Legend 5 Classic Blk Cherry
11195 - Spector Bass Performer 5 Black SP5BK
12406 - Spector Legend Custom 5 String, Amber
13214 - Spector Legend Custom 5 String, Black
6448 - Westcoast JB5, Trans Amber
9351 - Yamaha BB425 5 String Bass Guitar, Black
8275 - Yamaha BB425X,Sunburst, Used
8999 - Yamaha RBX5A2 5 String Bass, Black
8023 - Yamaha TRB1005J 5 String, Caramel Brown
4889 - Yamaha TRB1005J Bass, Natural
10308 - Yamaha TRBX305 Bass
13389 - Yamaha TRBX305 Bass, Candy Apple Red
10310 - Yamaha TRBX505 Bass

Acoustic Basses

8687 - Breedlove Passport Plus B350/CB4
13297 - Freshman FA350B Acoustic Bass, Used
5393 - Levin LAB150 Bass, Electro 4, Black
5394 - Levin LAB150 Bass, Electro 4, Natural
5392 - Levin LAB150 Bass, Electro 4, Sunburst
6782 - Levin LB100 Bass, Electro 4, Sunburst
12351 - Ortega D Walker White Short Scale
10498 - Ortega D Walker Acoustic Bass, Black
13014 - Tanglewood TWRBE Travel Bass Guitar
12292 - Westfield PJB380 Acoustic Bass Natural

Electric Upright Basses

4910 - Bridge Cetus Electric Double Bass
5110 - NS Design NXT Electric Double Bass
6360 - Yamaha SLB200 Silent Double Bass

Fretless Basses

13264 - Bass Collection Portrait Fretless 5
13371 - Squier Vintage Modified Fretless Bass

String Deals

2 Sets of Elite (4 String) £25 inc P&P
2 Sets of Elite (5 String) £30 inc P&P
2 Sets of Rotosound (4 String) £25 inc P&P
2 Sets of Rotosound (5 String) £30 inc P&P
2 Sets of D'Addario (4 String) £35 inc P&P
2 Sets of D'Addario (4 String) £40 inc P&P

Bass Combos

6762 - A arena BASS45 (45W, 1x12)
5627 - AER Amp One (200W, 1x10)
4942 - AER Amp Two (240W, 1x12)

Ashdown Engineering

4389 - Ashdown 220 Touring 112 (220W, 1x12)
4388 - Ashdown 220 Touring 115 (220W, 1x15)
4385 - Ashdown 330 Touring 115H (300W, 1x15)
11192 - Ashdown ABM C115H Neo Evo 3
6459 - Ashdown ABM C210T-500 EVO 3 (575W)
12259 - Ashdown ABM Mini 115 NEO Bass Cab
12258 - Ashdown ABM Mini 210 NEO 2x10
11193 - Ashdown ABM NEO C210 400W 2x10
8712 - Ashdown ABM414H 4 x 10 Bass Cabinet
8714 - Ashdown After Eight 20 Bass Combo
13135 - Ashdown DH15 C110 Drophead
13134 - Ashdown DH30 C115 Drophead Valve
8757 - Ashdown Electric Blue 12 220
8758 - Ashdown Electric Blue EB15 220
8751 - Ashdown Five Fifteen ABM100 Combo
8753 - Ashdown Five Fifteen Mini Rig 100
8718 - Ashdown Mag C115 300 Evo III Combo
8720 - Ashdown Mag C210T 300 Bass Combo
8727 - Ashdown Mag C410T 600 Evo III
9320 - Ashdown MiBass C110-200
9321 - Ashdown MiBass C115 550 Bass Combo
8750 - Ashdown Perfect Ten 40 Bass Combo
13202 - Ashdown RM-C115-420 420w Combo
9311 - Ashdown TE12 C115h Bass Combo
9310 - Ashdown TE12 C210h 12 Band
5224 - Ashdown Tourbus 10 (10W, 1x6.5)
5062 - Ashdown Tourbus 15 (15W, 1x8)
13122 - Ashdown Vintage Twelve 75 Combo
8988 - EA Euphonic Audio iAmp 350 Head
12430 - Eden EC10 50 Watts Bass Amp Combo
12432 - Eden EC15 180W Bass Amp Combo
12431 - Eden EC210 2 x 10 Bass Amp Combo
13375 - Eden EC28 Bass Amp Combo
12429 - Eden EC8 20 Watt Bass Combo

Fender

4238 - Fender Rumble 15 (15W, 1x8)
12745 - Fender Rumble 200 Bass Combo
8284 - Fender Rumble 30 Bass Combo
4237 - Fender Rumble 350 (350W, 2x10)
4772 - Fender Rumble 75 Watt Bass Combo

Hartke

10104 - Hartke A35 35W Bass Combo
9278 - Hartke A70 Solid State Bass Amp Combo
9471 - Hartke David Ellefson A70 Bass Combo
9008 - Hartke HMH112C Bass Combo
9281 - Hartke Hydrive HMH210C Bass Combo
9279 - Hartke Kickback 15 Bass Amp Combo

Mark bass

9004 - Markbass 121 Lite Alain Caron Combo
6239 - Mark Bass CMD102P Bass Combo
6238 - Mark Bass CMD103H (400W, 3x10)
5472 - Mark Bass CMD151PJ Berlin(300W1x15)
13279 - MarkBass Markacoustic AC601 Combo
5473 - Mark Bass Micromark (50W, 1x6)
6240 - Mark Bass Mini CMD121P (300W,1x12)
5474 - Mark Bass Mini CMD151P (300W,1x15W)
5471 - Mark Bass Minimark (250W, 2x6)
5475 - Mark Bass CMD121H (300W, 1x12)
9940 - Markbass Mini CMD 151 Jeff Berlin
9939 - Markbass MiniMark 802 Bass Combo
9938 - MicroMark 801 Bass Combo

ORANGE

5234 - Orange Crush PiX 25BX (25W, 1x8)
5233 - Orange Crush PiX 50BXT (50W, 1x12)
10265 - Orange Crush Pix CR100BXT
10264 - Orange Terror Bass 500 Bass Combo

PEAVEY

8061 - Peavey MAX126 10 Watt Bass Combo
11005 - Peavey Max 110 Bass Amp Combo
5965 - Peavey Max 112 (35W, 1x12)
5964 - Peavey Max 115 (50W, 1x15)
11004 - Peavey Max 158 Bass Amp Combo
13372 - RM-C210T-420 420w 2 x 10 Rootmaster

Roland

6320 - Roland CB100 (100W, 1x12)
4433 - Roland CB120XL Cube 120X (120w1x12)
4435 - Roland Cube 20XL BASS (20W, 1x8)
4434 - Roland Cube 60XL (60W, 1x10)
5678 - Roland Microcube Bass RX, (5W, 4x4)
4599 - TC Electronic BG500 115 500W, 1x15

Bass Heads

13136 - Ashdown ABM400LITE Lightweight Head
4387 - Ashdown 330, 330W
4398 - Ashdown 427 Small Block 427W
4384 - Ashdown 550, 550W
8706 - Ashdown ABM1000 Lite Evo III
8704 - Ashdown ABM2000 Lite Evo III
6760 - Ashdown ABM500 EVO III 575W
6250 - Ashdown ABM500RC Evo III 575W
6761 - Ashdown ABM900 EVO 3, 575+575W
4399 - Ashdown JJ500 JJ Burnel Sig 575W
5338 - Ashdown BTA400 400W
13131 - Ashdown CTM100 100W Valve Bass Head
11229 - Ashdown CTM15 15 Watt Bass Amp Head
8707 - Ashdown CTM300 Classic Tube Magnifier
13192 - Ashdown Five 15 BBH 220w Big Boy Head
5064 - Ashdown Little Bastard 30, 30W
8708 - Ashdown Little Bastard 550 Head
6455 - Ashdown MAG300H Evo III 300W
10938 - Ashdown MIBASS 2.0 640w Small Bass Head
8713 - Ashdown Mag600 Head Evo III Bass Head
8710 - Asdown MiBass 220
13203 - Ashdown RM Mag 420 Bass Amp Head
9309 - Ashdown TE12 500H 12 Band Bass Head
13200 - Eden E300 Bass Amplifier
13198 - Eden WTX500 Bass Amp Head
9349 - Hartke HA2500 Bass Head
9027 - Hartke Kilo 1000 Bass Head
12382 - Hartke LH1000 Bass Head
10408 - MarkBass Bass MultiAmp Stereo
5675 - Mark Bass Little Mark 250 (250w)
5245 - Mark Bass Little Mark 800, 800W
6243 - Mark Bass Little Mark III Bass Head 500w
9035 - Markbass Little Mark III Tube Bass Head
5244 - MarkBass Little Mark Tube 800, 800W
5243 - Mark Bass SD1200, 1200W
7962 - Markbass TTE500 Randy Jackson Bass Head
9256 - Markbass Big Bang 500W Bass Head
9250 - Markbass Classic 300 Head
9941 - Markbass Little Mark 250 Head Black
9249 - Markbass L Mark Rocker 500 Bass Amp Head
9255 - Markbass Momark Modular Bass Systems
9944 - Markbass MultiAmp
9725 - Markbass TTE800 Randy Jackson Bass Head
6261 - Orange AD200 MK3
8231 - Orange Dark Terror Valve Guitar Head
5242 - Orange TB1000 1000W Terror
5351 - Orange Terror Bass 500 TB500
5957 - Peavey Pro VB3 300W
5960 - Peavey Tour 450, 450W

Bass Cabinets

8733 - Ashdown 210T Deep Lite Bass Cab
6457 - Ashdown ABM115 Compact (1x15)
6456 - Ashdown ABM410H (4x10)
4376 - Ashdown ABM610 (6x10)
5677 - Ashdown ABM810 (8x10)
4394 - Ashdown CL115 Large (1x15)
4393 - Ashdown CL410H (4x10)
4392 - Ashdown CL414H Plus Horn (4x10)
4391 - Ashdown CL610 Tilt-Cab (6x10)
4390 - Ashdown CL810 (8x10)
6146 - Ashdown NEO115H Compact (1x15)
6452 - Ashdown MAG115 Deep (1x15)
6451 - Ashdown MAG210T Deep (2x10)
8754 - Ashdown MAG414T Deep Lite
8730 - Ashdown Mag 115 Deep Lite Bass Cab
8755 - Ashdown Mag410T Deep 4 x 10 Bass Cab
8756 - Ashdown Mag810T 8 x 10" Bass Cab
9315 - Ashdown Mi10 Bass Cab
9316 - Ashdown Mi12 Bass Cab
4379 - Ashdown VS115 200 (1x15)
8691 - Ashdown VS212 200 2 x 12 Bass Cab
8711 - Ashdown VS412 600 Bass Extension Cab
13377 - Eden D112XST Bass Cab
13376 - Eden D410XST Bass Cab
13197 - Eden EX112 Compact Bass Cab
13374 - Eden EX115 Bass Cab
13195 - Eden EX210 Bass Cab
13199 - Eden EX410 Bass Cabinet
13201 - Eden EX410SC Bass Cabinet
9007 - Hartke HCH112 Bass Cab
9292 - Hartke HCH410 Hydrive 410 Bass Cab
4766 - Mark Bass NY804 New York 804 (8 x 4)
6241 - Mark Bass STD102HF (2x10)
6242 - Mark Bass STD104HF (4x10)
5476 - Mark Bass STD104HR (4x10)
5477 - Mark Bass STD151HR (1x15)
9033 - Markbass Traveler 121H Bass Ext Cab
9034 - Markbass Traveler 151 P Bass Guitar Cab
4733 - Mark Bass Traveller TRV102P (2x10)
5431 - Mark Bass NY121 New York 1x 12 Bass Cab
10412 - Markbass NY122 2 x 12 Bass Cab
10409 - Markbass NY151 1 x 15 Bass Cab
10410 - Markbass NY151 RJ 1 x 15" Randy Jackson
10411 - Markbass NY604 Bass Cab
6259 - Orange OBC115 (1x15)
10266 - Orange OBC210 Bass Guitar Speaker Cab
6260 - Orange OBC410H (4x10)
5241 - Orange OBC810 (8x10)
5239 - Orange SP212 Smart Power Isobaric (2x12)
6766 - Peavey 410TVX (4x10)

For full guitar details, pricing and photos, enter the number next to each guitar model into our SKU search facility on the website.

Although the 210T cab is a great piece of design, it's the amp that steals the show here. The EQ is intuitive and versatile, allowing quick and easy changes of tone. The mid frequencies in particular are well chosen and allow the most detailed adjustments. While I've got a mid-rich Jaco tone up, adding a little of the compressor raises the bar again, flattering my playing by gently smoothing out any inconsistencies of technique while adding a useful punch. Adding in a little of the drive gives the sound yet another dimension, and I found that however I set the EQ, adding a little of the drive was nearly always a positive thing. For instance, you wouldn't normally add grit to a mid-scooped slap tone, but here it sounded just great.

The analogue sub control was next to explore, and again I found it to be highly usable. Turned up full you get an effect almost like an octaver; used more subtly, you can replace some of the low resonances that may be lacking in your system. Used like this, the rig sounds much bigger than its compact size would suggest.

CONCLUSION

Although the 210T cab is made to a price, it's a perfect partner for the 420 amp, and punches well above its weight. As a combined bass rig, you have to look really hard to find anything to criticise. This setup would be ideal for any bassist looking to progress from a combo to their first serious stage stack, and even with one of the 210T cabs they'll have a versatile system that would handle most small and medium gigs – all for a reasonable outlay.

When you take into account that this new MAG Rootmaster kit is effectively Ashdown's budget range, this rig is even more impressive. If you're aware of the company's track record, it's not unreasonable to expect the new Rootmaster range to be good, but given the prices here, Ashdown have surpassed themselves. As with the ABM range, I'm sure this new series will prove to be a real winner for some time to come.

TECHNICAL SPECIFICATION

ASHDOWN MAG ROOTMASTER 420 AMP
PRICE | £399
INPUTS | 1 x 1/4" hi impedance.
POWER | 300W (RMS) Class D
IMPEDANCE | 4 ohms
CONTROLS | Input Level, 4 way EQ (Bass, Lo Mid 420Hz, Mid, Hi Mid 1.5 kHz, Treble), Shape, EQ in/out Compressor, Drive, Sub, output level Master Volume, DI out, FX Send/Return, Tuner Out, Speaker Out (min. 4 Ohm)
DIMENSIONS | (HxWxD) 79 x 312 x 226mm
WEIGHT | 6.1 kg

MAG ROOTMASTER 210T CAB
PRICE | £229
SPEAKERS | 2x12" Ashdown pressed chassis
POWER | 250w RMS
FREQUENCY RESPONSE | 60Hz to 20kHz
IMPEDANCE | 8 Ohms
DIMENSIONS | (HxWxD) 468 x 603 x 335mm
WEIGHT | 26kg

WHAT WE THINK

PLUS | The 210T is a lightweight and compact cab with quality speakers. The 420 amp delivers performance and features that sets a new (and high) standard for an amp at this price point
MINUS | Nothing comes to mind
OVERALL | Ashdown quality and tone at an amazingly low price. A lightweight and versatile rig that will deliver the goods night after night

BGM RATING

BUILD QUALITY	★★★★★★★★☆☆
SOUND QUALITY	★★★★★★★★☆☆
VALUE	★★★★★★★★★★

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Ellen O'Reilly is a freelance bassist and vocalist currently studying at ICMP. Ellen has extensive experience in gigging, studio and television work.
www.lowendlady.com

ELLEN O'REILLY BEGINNER'S THEORY 64

Paul Geary attended the Berklee College of Music in Boston and the Musicians' Institute of Technology. He also heads up the Academy Of Contemporary Music's bass school.
www.paulgeary.com

PAUL GEARY BEGINNER'S TECHNIQUES 66

Alex Webster founded the frankly terrifying Cannibal Corpse in 1988 and has guested since then on musically complex projects such as Blotted Science. He is the author of the Extreme Metal Bass instruction book.

ALEX WEBSTER INTERMEDIATE THEORY 68

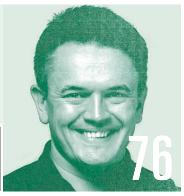
Rob Statham has amassed over 25 years as a professional freelance bass player. He has played in a wide range of musical settings, including jazz, blues, prog and classical, and he has taught for the past three years at Tech Music School.

ROB STATHAM INTERMEDIATE TECHNIQUES 70

Head of the Bass Department at BIMM Brighton, Franc has worked with artists such as Steve Howe (Yes), Lisa Moorish, and Mike Lindup (Level 42). Franc uses Jeff Chapman basses and Elites strings.
www.francoshea.com

FRANC O'SHEA ADVANCED THEORY 74

Say hello to our new advanced techniques columnist Philip Mann, star of studio and stage. Ready to get those fingers flying? Mann up...

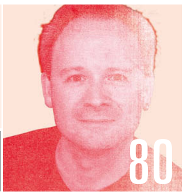


PHILIP MANN ADVANCED TECHNIQUES 76

David Etheridge studied double bass at the Royal College of Music. Since then he's worked with musicians such as Nigel Kennedy and Martin Taylor. David teaches double and electric bass and is the MD of two big bands and a 55-piece jazz orchestra.

DAVID ETHERIDGE UPRIGHT BASS 78

Mike has written for *BGM* since 2004 and has been a bassist since 1987, clocking up over 3000 gigs around the world in the process. He has played for and worked with the likes of Bonnie Tyler and Toyah Willcox, and has a bass collection to rival a small shop.



MIKE BROOKS COVER BAND PRO 80

Steve Lawson is the UK's most celebrated solo bass guitarist, with 15 years of touring and 36 solo and collaborative albums to his name. He also lectures at colleges around the world.
www.stevelawson.net.

STEVE LAWSON EFFECTS MAESTRO 81

BASS TECHNIQUES

MAKING YOU A BETTER BASS PLAYER

Welcome to our redesigned techniques section, in which *Bass Guitar Magazine* collates the wit and wisdom of the *crème de la crème* of the electric and upright bass world. We're fortunate enough to have some serious talent on the team, from world-class music educators to experienced touring musicians, who between them have laid down the low notes in every studio, club and arena in the civilised world. Note that we've divided the columns according to **Beginner**, **Intermediate** and **Advanced** level for easy reference. Whether you're looking to improve your playing technique, expand your awareness of theory, set up your rig to sound like your particular bass hero or simply get on a bus and tour, we provide the answers you need here. What are you waiting for? Dive in...
Joel McIver, editor

THE FRONT LINE

WANT TO MAKE IT AS A PROFESSIONAL BASSIST? ABSORB THE COLLECTIVE WISDOM OF OUR PROFESSIONAL BASS TEAM, OUT THERE DOING IT FOR A LIVING

THE JAZZ BASSIST

RUTH GOLLER

Hep cat Ruth talks goals and objectives

As a professional bass player, managing your time can be a tricky thing. I have been a professional musician since I started studying: this has been a gradual process, but over the years I have become busier and busier, for which I am grateful. I started out like everyone else, doing everything I got offered. I went to lots of jam sessions, did lots of gigs for no money, or even gigs where I knew I would lose money. I probably got ripped off a few times, but I know now that this was all part of my development. Don't get me wrong: I strongly disagree with playing for no money while other players walk home with lots of cash in their pockets, but it's good to do charity gigs once in a while, and sometimes you never know what the benefit will be – there might be someone important in the audience, for example. I think that playing for free really helped me to get to know the scene and to get to know myself as a musician. Now, after having played professionally for about 10 years, I am a bit more choosey about which gigs I take. I feel that I understand more about what I need to develop, and also which gigs I need to take in order to support myself financially. Of course, I wish that money wasn't an issue, but it is: sometimes, doing a well-paid gig allows you to move more freely for the rest of the month. I am now working towards a goal, which I know I might never reach. I know how I want to develop, to get closer to what kind of musician I want to be, and to know what music I want to play. At the same time, I know I have to be careful, and not to be closed-minded, therefore I analyse every situation and see what's best to take on. My happiness with the music is paramount, which sounds selfish, but I can only give 100 percent to music I like, while being as truthful to my art as possible.

soundcloud.com/ruth-goller

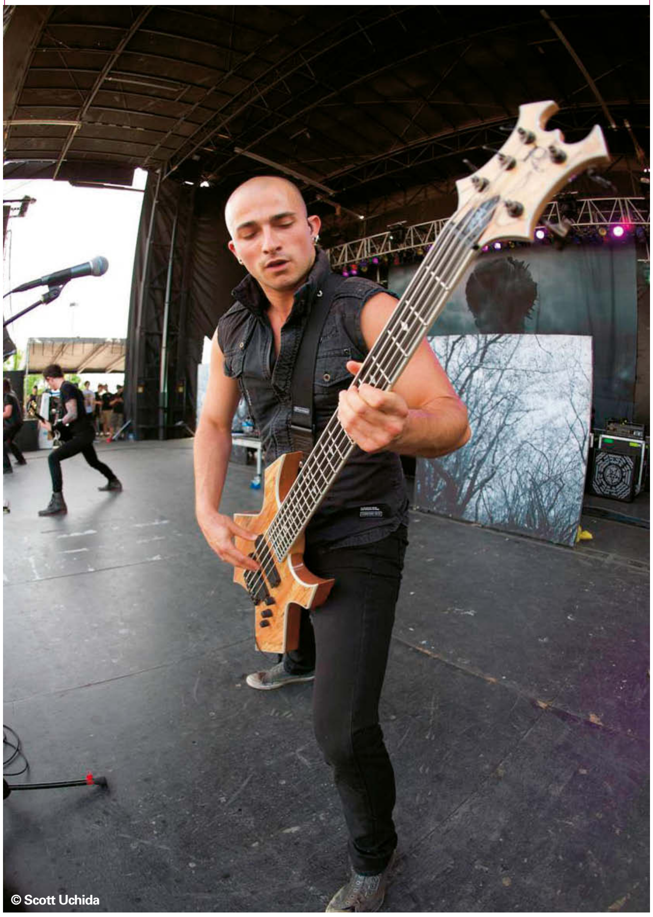
THE METALHEAD

PAOLO GREGOLETTO

Trivium's bassist observes the rise of the rock festival

Today I'm writing from the infamous Ambassador Hotel in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. Its history will forever be intertwined with a man named Jeffrey Dahmer, the serial killer. It's nice in a *Shining* sort of way. I needed a break from everything, the heat, the noise, and the carnival atmosphere of Rockstar Energy's Mayhem Festival 2014. It's been a hell of tour so far, and we are just crossing the three-week mark with a few giant shows on the horizon. First and foremost, let me say that it's been an honour to be apart of the main stage this year. I love that the Mayhem Festival goes out of its way to provide for all the bands: it's much more artist-friendly than Ozzfest ever was, and they should be commended for that. Of course the headliners will get dressing rooms every day and prime bus parking, but at least everyone has access to catering and a shower without being made to feel inferior, or 'lucky to be here'. In terms of the crowd, the difference is incredible. Say there are 15,000 people at a show on a hot summer day, you can bet that half will not show up until later in the afternoon, and maybe even skip the second stages altogether. I've actually seen people sitting on the ground next to a fried dough stand, while not more than 300 feet away, a band is giving it their all on one of the three side stages. When we toured on Ozzfest in America in 2005, the second stage felt exciting: it was the place to be to catch one of the rotating bands that might be the next big thing. When we got the call that we were going to be a part of it, we flipped out: it was the big break we needed here at home. Having played the side stages on Mayhem twice before, I can say that there is plenty of talent out here. I sense that there is now a wider gap between the underground and the mainstream rock and metal community than there was 10 years ago.

www.trivium.org



© Scott Uchida

THE ALTERNATIVE ROCKER

MICHAEL MCKEEGAN

Therapy? bassist and Jedi master Mike finds an apprentice

I've recently had to sit out a couple for shows due to family commitments and have been in the process of training a super-sub up to do the shows. When I say 'train', it's more a case of double-checking that everything he'd learned was sounding good and giving general support or advice if needed. It's going to be weird missing a gig after 24 years in the band, but as everyone knows, when you've been around this length of time, stuff tends to 'happen'... The trickiest bit, once we'd decided to go ahead with the shows and look for a stand-in for me, was to find the right person for the task in hand. It would be easy and perhaps logical to get in some super session player who was all chops and could play our stuff in his or her sleep, but for us it was important to get someone who got what our songs are about. Being an idiosyncratic bunch, that was probably easier said than done. It's a bit like that question, 'Who would play you in a movie of your life?' rephrased as 'Who would represent your bass playing and put it across well in a live environment?' Thankfully I knew a killer bass player with a style not dissimilar to my own, nicely aggressive and tight. His regular band also played in similar drop tunings to ours and he's a bit of a Therapy? fan, so he knew most of the songs already and had spent time touring with us. On a personal level he knew the other chaps well, and knew what our onstage and offstage vibes were. We've had quite a few run-throughs, working through the set and just tweaking any fiddly bits or pointing out things that tend to get featured or exaggerated live. He's done a sterling job, and as much as I'm going to be jealous I'm not doing the shows, I'm really looking forward to hearing how he puts our stuff across live. Now all I have to do is convince him to grow a beard, shave his head and wear all black.

www.therapyquestionmark.co.uk

THE EXTENDED-RANGE SPECIALIST

STEWART MCKINSEY

Stew gets into the alternate tunings zone. Focus, baby!

Welcome back to the extended range, my sisters and brothers. Let's look at some specific approaches to our instrument. Stepping away from thinking from a bass perspective, what if you look at extended range basses from the mindset of a guitarist, pianist or cellist? A guitarist is taught to learn to play in several ways. He or she must understand melody as well as rhythm, and understands that two of the pivotal roles to be played are in providing chordal support as well as potentially serving as a soloist. This means that a good guitarist understands a great deal about the structure of a song and may be able to move from the greater soundscape to a more visible role, playing on top of what the band is playing. This kind of comprehensive knowledge of how the music works and of its arrangement can benefit anyone, but particularly those trying to break free of a paradigm – or create a new one. A pianist's training starts with reading multiple parts of music. Melody and harmony are as fundamental in piano education as rhythm. This musician is expected to be able to perform in a solo context almost immediately. Keyboardists are also the keepers of theory: anyone who knows his or her way around the keys is likely to know more about chords and harmony than someone playing any other instrument for the same amount of time. You find many pianists leading groups. This is logical, as arranging and unifying many voices is what keyboardists do. And why would I mention cello alongside guitar and piano? Because a cellist is taught impeccable technique, how to develop a solo voice and play in a string quartet as well as part of an orchestra. The instrument is voiced between many others and so its practitioners constantly move from lead/melody to support roles. The discipline of a cellist is something we could all examine. How are you thinking of your instrument? Does your approach parallel something else that you could actively study, or are you trying to break wholly new ground? Are you listening to more than one or two parts when you hear music? Are you composing music? Next month we face one of the most difficult questions of all...

www.facebook.com + search 'Stewart McKinsey'

ELLEN O'REILLY

THIS MONTH, ELLEN INTRODUCES COMPOUND INTERVALS AND REVEALS THE UTILITY OF THE 9TH EXTENSION

Hey low enders, in the last beginners theory column we took a look at 7th chords, made up of a root, 3rd, 5th and 7th. These are also known as four-note chords: they highlight the four chord tones that give each chord its defining character.

Chords are built up as follows:

C Maj (triad)
C Maj7 (four-note chord)
C Maj9 (extended chord)

Now, these four chord tones fit neatly within the octave of a given scale and are very useful in describing a particular chord. Playing chord tones within the octave means that you are playing what is also known as simple intervals. However, you can go beyond the octave into what is also known as compound intervals or extensions.

Simple intervals:
C D E F G A B C D E F G A B C

Compound intervals
As discussed in last month's column, chords are created by stacking thirds. You play the root, skip the 2nd and then play the 3rd and so on until you reach the 7th, but you can keep going up. The next note up from the 7th is the octave, which is just the root a pitch up. After the octave you would reach what is known as the 9th but is actually the 2nd. The 4th becomes the 11th and the 6th becomes the 13th. As shown in the example given here, by playing extensions you are actually playing all the notes of the scale in leaps of thirds over two octaves.

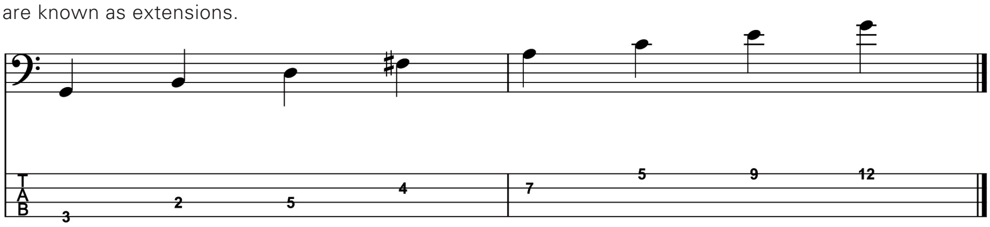
C E G B D F A
R 3rd 5th 7th 9th 11th 13th

We will look at 11th and 13th extensions in the next column, but for now let's really get to understand the 9th. The 9th is just the 2nd interval played an octave up. It's actually my favourite extension: I find it very easy to use, as it's so melodic. Queen bassist John Deacon uses this extension a lot throughout many of his wonderful bass-lines, as it quickly adds melodic interest. Have a listen to the Queen song 'Those Were The Days Of Our Lives' to hear Deacon's trademark "sliding to the 9".

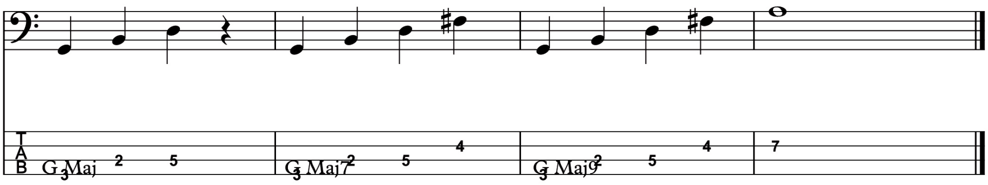
This extension can be altered in the following ways:
b 9th (b2)
9th (2 or diatonic 2)
#9th (#2)

We will look at altered extensions in more depth in the future. For the moment, experiment with adding the 9th to your own bass-lines – and have fun!

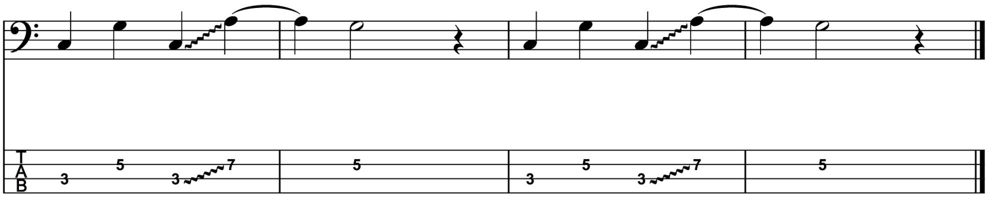
Here are the chord tones both below and above the octave in the key of G Major, beyond the octave they are known as extensions.



Here are three examples of a G Major chord, the first one is a triad, followed by a four note chord and then an extended chord using the 9.



Here is an example of a typical John Deacon-style lick in the key of C Major incorporating the 9th.



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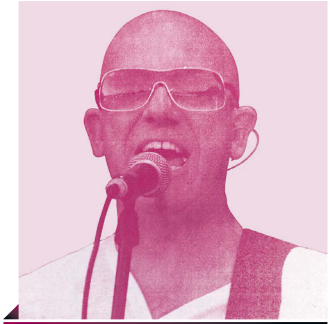


PAUL GEARY

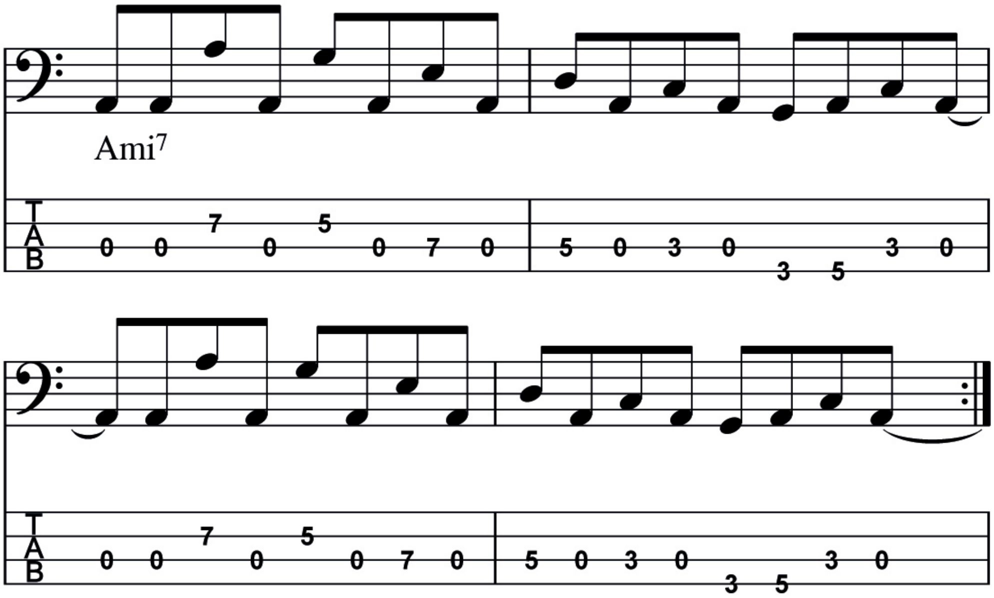
'ON YOUR BIKE!' SAYS DRILL SERGEANT GEARY. GET PEDALLING!

This month I would like to take a look at some eighth note pedal grooves. Over the years I have found this technique to be a real asset when faced with having to improvise a bass-line over a chord that repeats for consecutive bars. For instance if we have four bars of A minor7, other than the root of A, what choices do we have? The answer is many!

Example 1

Let's start off with the root of A. All the examples work well over minor seventh chords: however, let your ear be the final judge. Each riff is built around an eighth note rhythmical pattern, so be sure to keep these steady and played at a tempo that allows the line to flow smoothly.

The first interval we play is an octave up from the open A string (high A, seventh fret, D string), followed by a minor seventh interval on G (fifth fret, D string), a perfect fifth on E (seventh fret, A string), a perfect fourth on D (fifth fret, A string), followed by a minor third on low C played on the third fret of the A string. The object is to pedal back to the low A. The last phrase is a turnaround using low G (third fret, E string) open A and low C (third fret, A string).



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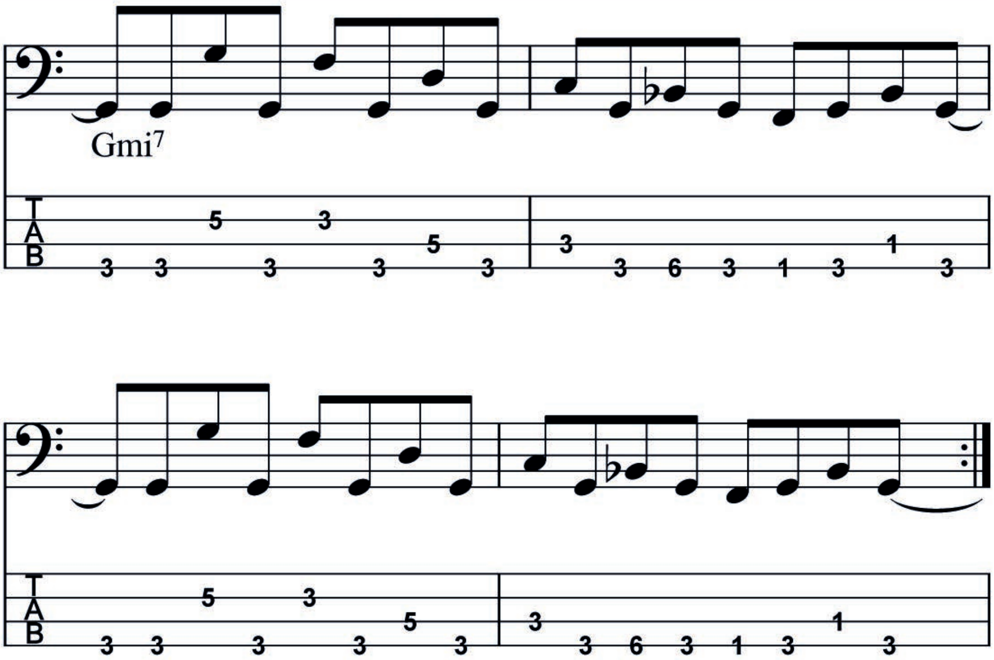
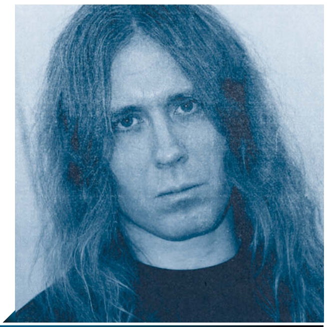
Example 2

This next example is based on the same pattern and grouping of intervals, using eighth notes as above, but starting on the root of a G minor 7th chord. The main challenge is to play the pedal groove in a closed position without open strings. It is always good practice not to rely too heavily on open strings. The minute we are faced with playing any bass-line in a different key, starting on a different root note isn't as bigger issue if you have learned it in a closed position. As above, let your ear always be the final judge – and most importantly, let the genre govern the actual line.

Try this bass-line in as many keys as you can and at different areas of the neck. Watch out for those tied notes in bars two and four. Next month we will put the pedal groove into practice with an actual song. Until next time, keep working hard.





ALEX WEBSTER

ALEX HEADS INTO UNCHARTED SCALE TERRITORY. BUCKLE UP!

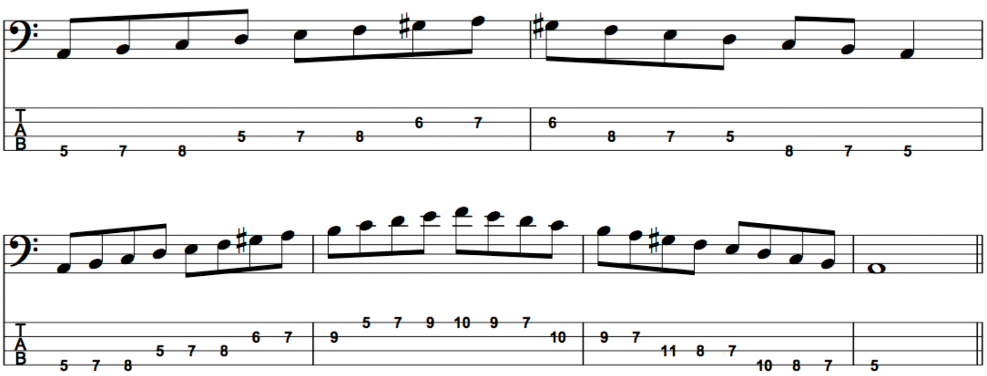
This month I'd like to take a look at some less common scales, ones that are often referred to as 'exotic'. There are a lot more scales in this category than those we'll work with here, but I think these are a good starting point.

To begin with, let's review the A harmonic minor scale. Although this scale is extremely common it has a somewhat exotic sound due to the minor third/half step interval progression that occurs between its sixth, seventh, and octave (F, G#, A). This minor third/half step sequence occurs in all of the scales we'll be looking at today, sometimes more than once. It has a very distinct sound that sets it apart from the more conventional half step/whole step sequences found in the natural major and minor scales.

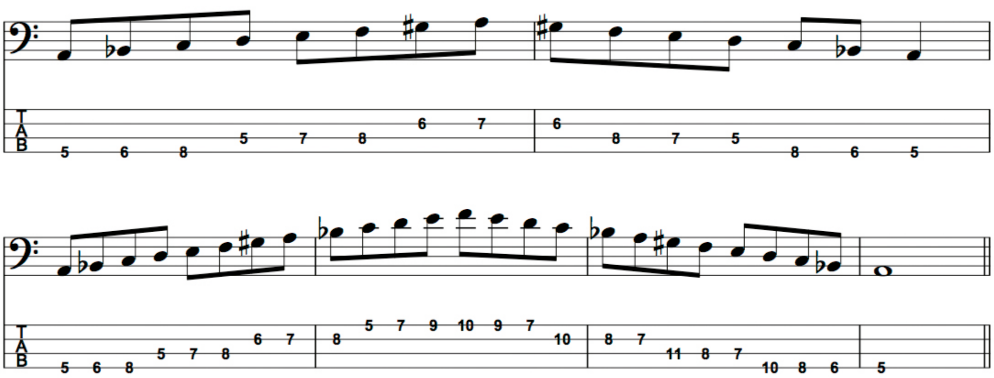
In the first half of example one we'll work through one octave of the scale, and in the second half we'll play a longer pattern that requires a shift at its apex from E to F. Basically, you're going up the scale using its first mode and returning down using its second. We will use a similar format for all four scale examples this month.

Be careful with your hands while practising these patterns. If the stretches seem too

Example 1 Harmonic Minor

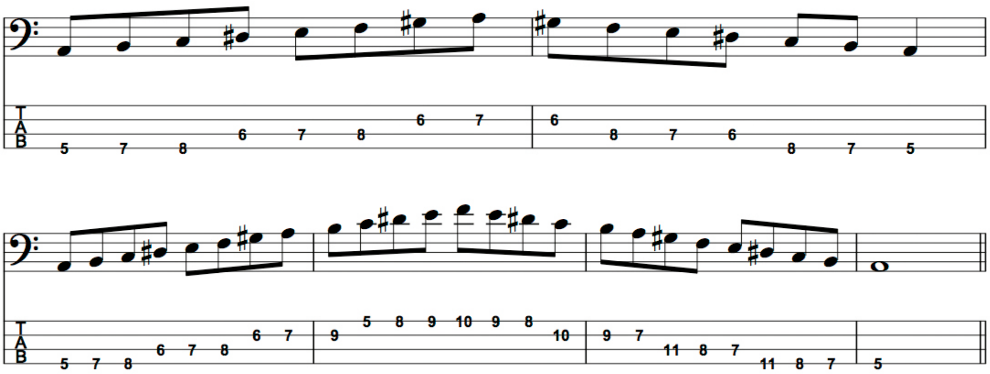


Example 2 Neapolitan Minor



"BE CAREFUL WITH YOUR HANDS WHILE PRACTISING THESE PATTERNS. IF THE STRETCHES SEEM TOO UNCOMFORTABLE YOU MIGHT WANT TO CONSIDER TRANSPOSING THE ENTIRE LESSON FROM A TO E SO THAT YOU CAN START THE EXERCISES FROM THE TWELFTH FRET RATHER THAN THE FIFTH"

Example 3 Hungarian Minor



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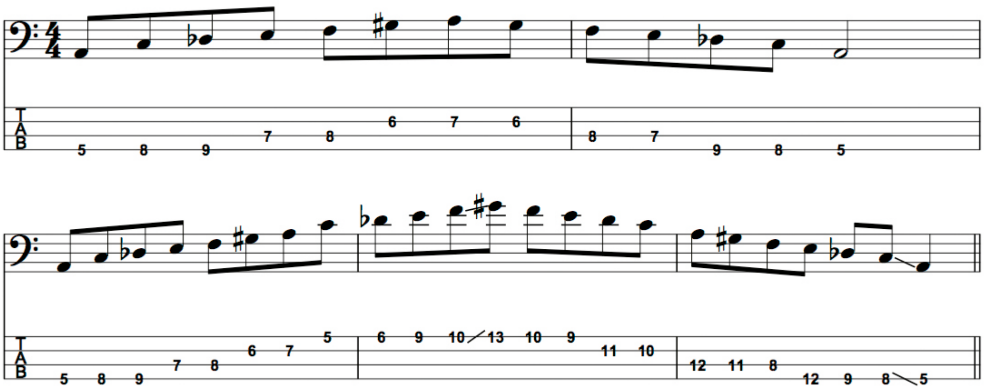
uncomfortable you might want to consider transposing the entire lesson from A to E so that you can start the exercises from the twelfth fret rather than the fifth.

Example two shows the A Neapolitan minor scale, which is almost most identical to A harmonic minor, the only difference being its second degree, which is flattened.

The Hungarian minor scale is shown in example three, and like Neapolitan it is very similar to harmonic minor, the difference this time being that the fourth is raised by a half step. You'll notice that this creates an additional minor third/half step progression within the scale.

Example four shows the A augmented scale, which is a bit different from the other scales shown in this month's column in that it is hexatonic (six note) rather than heptatonic (seven note), and it is symmetrical (built from a short repeating interval sequence). Despite these differences I thought it would fit well alongside these other scales, since they all contain the minor third/half step sequence that the augmented scale is built with. Like other symmetrical scales, the augmented scale's tonal center is very unclear and dependent on the harmonic context of a piece of music. For example, the A augmented scale played over a C# augmented chord would actually be more appropriately called the C# augmented scale.

Example 4 Augmented Scale



Once you've finished working through examples two through four I recommend that you try playing those scales in places where you'd normally play A harmonic minor, for example over an A minor/major 7 chord (ACEG#). They all work well with that chord but they each bring a different, 'exotic' flavour to it.

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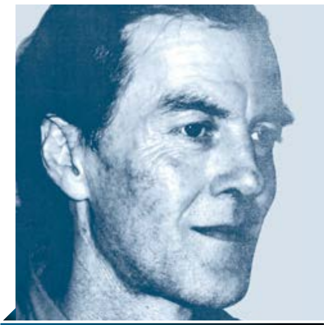


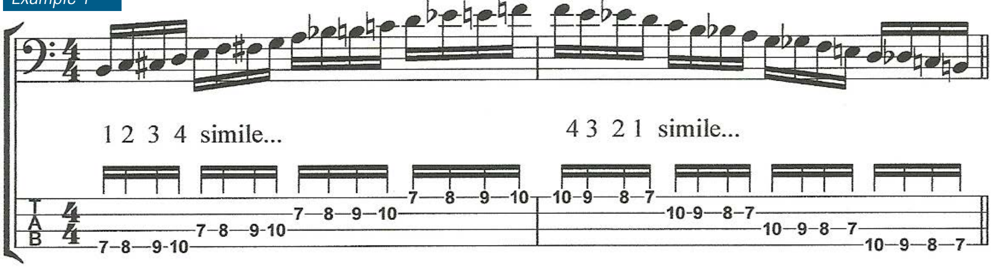
ROB STATHAM

PROFESSOR STATHAM GETS THOSE FRETTING FINGERS WORKING

This month I would like to share some ideas and exercises that can help us improve our fretting hand technique, the aim being to achieve an efficient physical playing technique coupled with efficient approaches to fingering solutions. Technique-building exercises can be rather mechanical and repetitive, not necessarily appearing to have any direct practical application, other than the sense that it is 'doing us some good', and yet often we will need to work on these types of exercise. However, we can contrive exercises that challenge our physical playing technique, providing a good workout in this regard, that have more apparent practical uses, and I hope to illustrate that point with some of the examples presented this month.

Having said that, the first exercise is something of a mechanical, physical challenge, a different take on the chromatic, one-finger-per-fret exercises we've all done. Quite simply, we are just playing four notes chromatically on each string in turn, ascending and then descending, an exercise I'm sure you've played before. Doubtless you're aware that the intention is to foster a good fretting hand posture, covering one finger per fret. However, although we may play each note with the correct finger, sometimes our other fingers seem to take on a life of their own and end up in all sorts of odd positions, so we need to

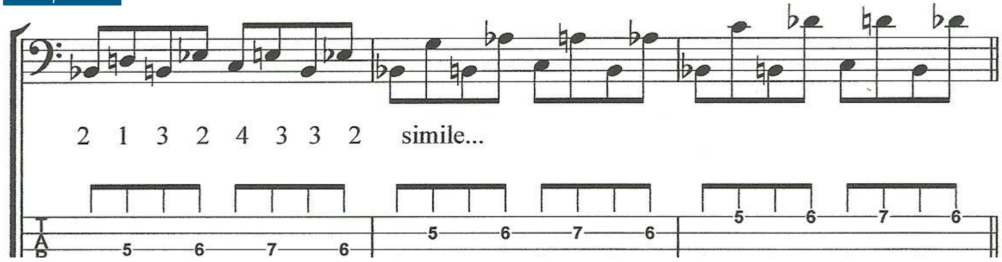
Example 1



focus on keeping all fingers close to the strings and close to the appropriate fret at all times. I have notated the exercise starting on the note B on the seventh fret of the E string, but you could start a little higher if that's more comfortable.

The aim here is to keep all fingers on the strings, in position, for each note played. For example, as we play the first note B with the first finger, fingers two, three, and four should be held down on the appropriate fret on the next string up, the A string, and we can simply move them across as needed. Thus, by the time we have played the first four notes, all four fingers will be held down on the E string, and now we can move each finger across from there in turn as needed, the others remaining held down. The first finger moves first to play E at the seventh fret on the A string, and then each other finger as required. In this manner, we can ascend each string in turn, and then descend in the same fashion, with all fingers held down for each note played.

Example 2



This is not too easy at first, and how difficult you find this exercise is a good measure of where your fretting hand technique is at in terms of finger independence. It is also rather counterintuitive to move a finger and place it on another string and yet play the string we have just removed our finger from, something that happens on the descending form of this exercise, so you will need to proceed slowly and deliberately at first to avoid playing the string to which you have just moved your finger. This can be an effective warm-up exercise, and over time will help to foster good posture, our fingers in position and close to the strings at all times.

Another useful technical challenge that helps foster good fingering posture is to play a particular interval chromatically while maintaining the same left hand position, so, for instance, a major third with the second and first finger, then third and second, then fourth and third, our left hand remaining in the same four fret position rather than shifting up in semitones in order to use the same finger pair. I've taken this idea a stage further in the next exercise to combine it with some string-crossing challenges.

The exercise starts off as described above in the first bar, playing a major third in semitones, but ensuring that we keep to the one-finger-per-fret concept. Thus the first two notes are played with the second and then first finger, the next pair of notes with the third then second finger, and so on, enabling us to keep our hand in the same four-fret position. The second bar is using the same fingering pairs, but by crossing a string we are now playing the interval of a major sixth in semitones. This will feel a little awkward at first, especially the third pair of notes, using our fourth and third fingers, but more awkward yet is the next bar,

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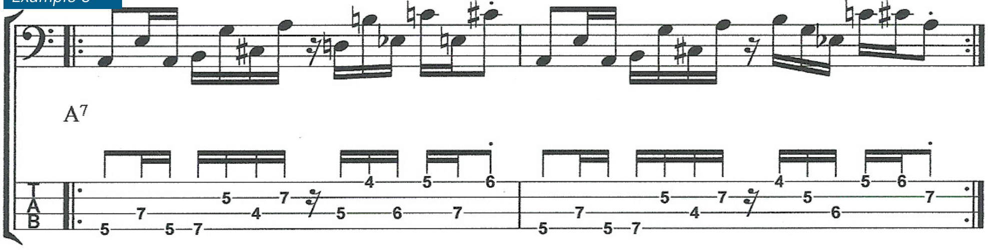
now skipping another string while playing the same fingering pairs, resulting in the interval of a major ninth. Take this slowly at first, but once it's a little more under your fingers you could challenge yourself with some variations, for instance, reversing the pairs of notes or mixing the intervals in one bar, the point being that any combinations should all be played within the same four-fret hand position with no shifts, and with each finger always at the appropriate fret.

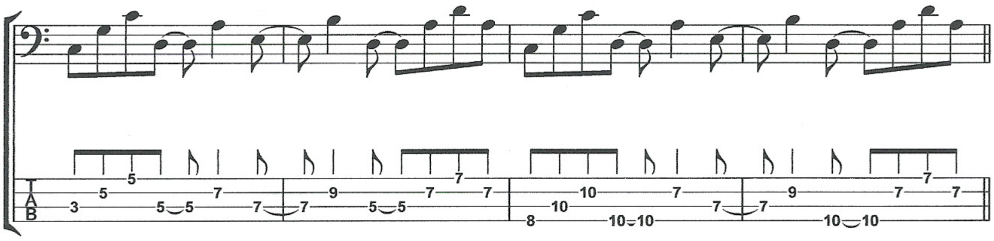
The next example demonstrates the above idea and some variation in the context of a two bar bass-line on an A7 chord. Thus, at the end of the first bar, the last six notes, we have major sixths moving up in semitones, and, in the same place at the end of the second bar, we have the same fingering pairs playing sixths and thirds, also using the idea of reversing the order of the note pairs. Specifically, we have a descending major third, an ascending major sixth, and then another descending major third.

Turning to the first half of each bar, which is the same both times, you will notice that the second beat consists of two minor sixths a tone apart. Notice that again we remain in the same four-fret position, meaning that the two minor sixths are played with different fingering, the first one with what we might term 'backward' fingering, the direction of movement being back towards the headstock, the second which we might correspondingly term 'forward', the general direction being up the neck. You are likely used to thinking of minor thirds, particularly in these 'forward' and 'backward' ways, but it's important to see where they might be useful when playing other intervals, and how they might present fingering solutions requiring fewer position shifts. As

Example 3



Example 4



you can see, this two bar bass-line can – by using these alternative fingerings – be played all in one position, no shifts required.

The final example demonstrates this idea with a bass-line that uses fifths and octaves: familiar territory for us. We often tend to think of the same default shape for this pattern and then move it as required to the necessary root note. Sometimes this can present problems with the position shifting required, so it's worth seeing where using 'backward' fifths and octave patterns can negate the need for a position shift. I've demonstrated this by notating the two-bar figure twice, the tab in the first two bars denoting how we might commonly approach playing this idea using the stock root, fifth, octave shape, whereas the third and fourth bars, by incorporating alternative fifth and octave fingerings, enable the entire idea to be played in one position.

I would add that I'm not saying that these are 'correct' fingering solutions, nor that we should necessarily always aim to play everything in one position – sometimes a position shift might be a better alternative to allow us to slide up to a note, or it may simply feel better to you. But if our technique is secure enough that it enables us to consider these types of solutions then it will provide us with more options, which can only be a good thing.

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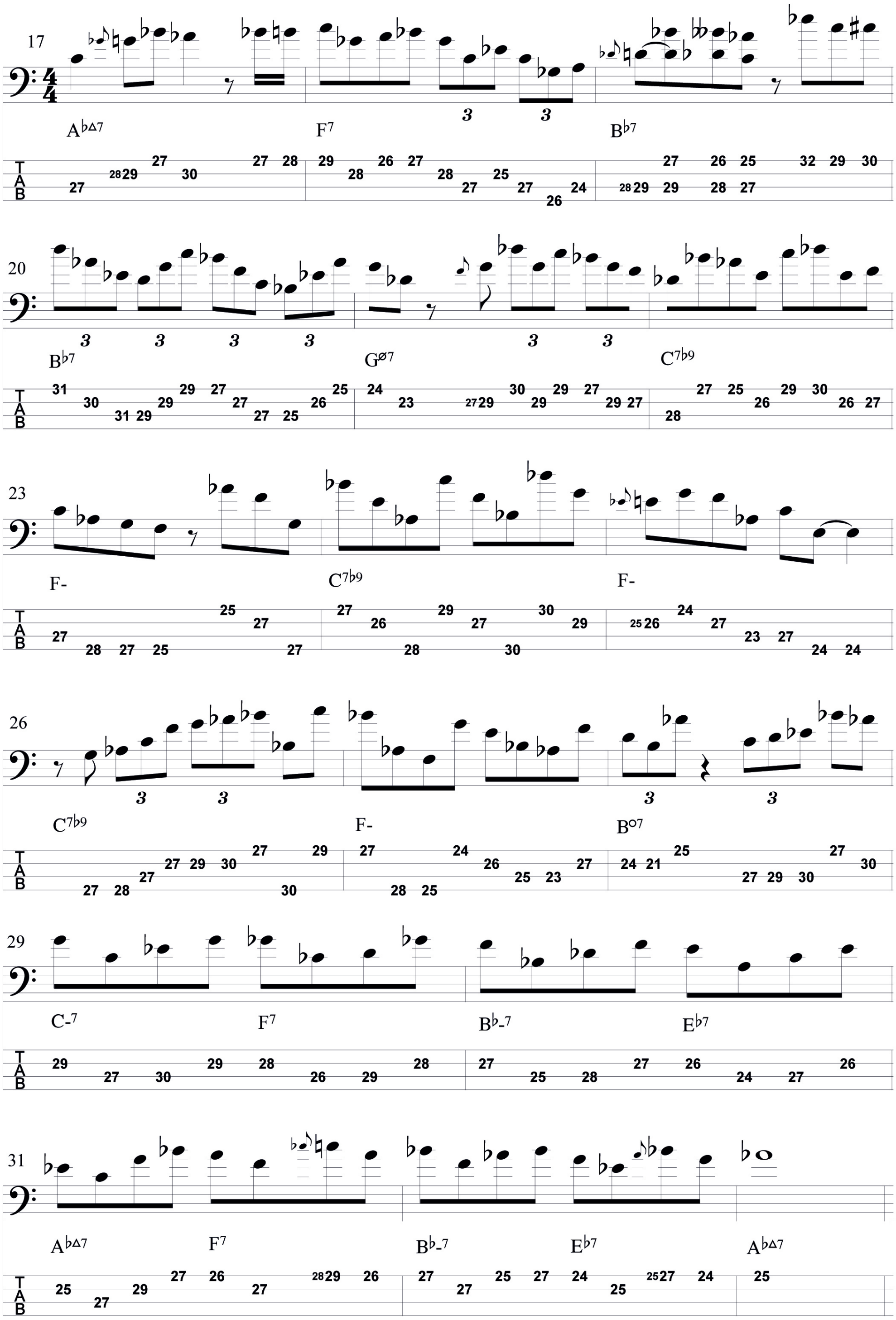
FRANC O'SHEA

ADVANCED THEORY NINJA FRANC CONTINUES TO SALUTE THE MIGHTY 'DONNA LEE'

Example 1



In this month's column I present the second half of a solo I have created for the bebop classic 'Donna Lee', once again bringing together relevant material from my previous columns. Last month I looked at the first 16 bars and following on from this I will be analysing bars 17 to 32. Both halves combined demonstrate a complete solo for a whole chorus of 'Donna Lee'.

Back in *BGM* 107 I speculated whether or not Jaco Pastorius had worked out his solo on his ground-breaking version of 'Donna Lee' from his first solo album. Further evidence has come to light with the recent release of *Modern American Music… Period! The Criteria Sessions*, which has been produced in conjunction with the Pastorius estate and Metallica's Robert Trujillo (see *BGM* 108). This long-awaited demo release from 1974 features many of the selections that would later appear on *Jaco Pastorius*, including a solo version of 'Donna Lee' without congas. Incredibly, Jaco was only 22 years old at the time, a formidable feat heightened further by the fact that the year was 1974 and no one else was playing electric bass with such prowess.

This demo version of 'Donna Lee' certainly clears up part of the mystery. Jaco's tone and touch are instantly recognisable even though the recording is somewhat muffled compared to his 1976 release, but what is intriguing is how close his articulation and phrasing are to the later version. Both the opening and final melodies are virtually the same as the later recording, and the final head even includes the ascending chromatic run leading into the final E9 (add 6) harmonics chord that Jaco used to finish the piece. The first chorus of Jaco's solo is almost identical to the 1976 version, with

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only slight differences.

The second chorus of his solo is different for the most part, giving rise to the speculation that Jaco possibly reworked the second half for his debut album, creating more definition than is apparent on the demo version. None of this, however, diminishes Jaco's incredible ability as an improvising soloist as is evident on other recordings. It not only highlights his excellent compositional skills but also how he could create a perfect solo for a set of standard changes.

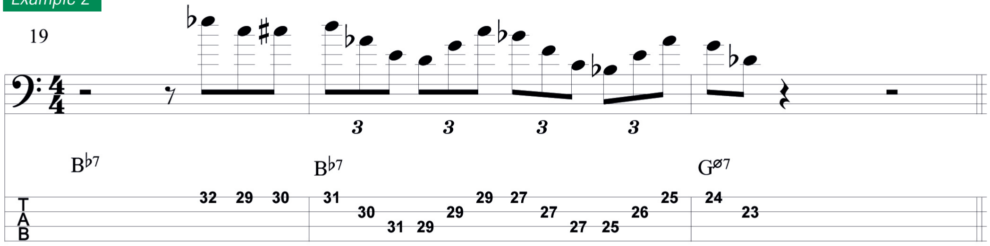
In the example I present here, I follow Jaco's principle of clearly outlining the changes while remaining melodic and adding some rhythmic interest. I will also occasionally use motifs that I demonstrated in my column in *BGM* 106, so you might want to have it at hand to refer to.

The first half of the solo, which appeared last month, demonstrated a succession of ideas that increase in complexity as the solo progresses. The aim being that the solo gradually draws in the listener so that it takes them on a journey without losing them from the start. Now we have reached the second half, you will see that the ideas continue to develop further, both intervallically and rhythmically. However, the last few bars are more grounded and serve to solidly round the solo off.

Example one shows the entire second half of the solo and it starts out where we left off last month with the major 3rd of Abmaj7 on the first beat of bar 17. The phrase that occurs on beats two and three of this bar uses the motif I first demonstrated in the second example in my column in *BGM* 106. A chromatic run leads up to the perfect 5th of the next chord, F7, which is followed by a descending diminished triplet run based on the use of a Phrygian dominant scale. The whole phrase is rounded off in bar 19 with a series of chromatically descending minor 6th double stops providing a tasty contrast to the angular diminished run.

Bar 19 ends with a corkscrew motif (see example six in *BGM* 106), which leads into an alternating descending and ascending 4ths phrase in bar 20. This motif injects a more modern sound into the proceedings and was demonstrated in example seven of *BGM* 106. The similar motif appearing in bar 20 is based on using a Mixolydian mode for the Bb7 chord. You could, however, use a Lydian dominant mode instead to create an even more modern sound as demonstrated in example two. The phrase in example one is completed by including the diminished 5th and root of the G half diminished 7th chord in bar 21.

Example 2



A Kumoi pentatonic scale is then employed to outline the G half diminished chord (see example five in *BGM* 106) before leading into a Phrygian dominant phrase on the C7b9 chord, which continues to lead smoothly down to the root of the following F minor chord in bar 23. The final note of this phrase is an F, which acts as the root for the following phrase, which stretches from bar 23 to bar 25. Some readers might find this phrase familiar as it is similar to a passage that appears at the beginning of the fourth bar of JS Bach's 'Chromatic Fantasy'. An interesting rhythmic effect occurs in this context, as the phrase is an ascending motif of groups of three notes creating a shifting of accents across the 4/4 pulse that is finally resolved in bar 25 where an FminMaj9 chord is suggested.

The next long phrase highlights a Phrygian dominant mode on the C7b9 in bar 26 before launching into an unusual use of wide intervals on the fourth beat, which continues into the Fmin chord in the next bar. The intervals in question are major 9ths and they appear as alternately ascending and descending. This is a good example of how you can be influenced by someone else's idea but use it as a springboard to create something original, as this idea was inspired by Jaco's use of alternating ascending and descending octaves in his bass-line on Weather Report's 'Birdland'. It appears at about 1'45" into the *Heavy Weather* album version.

My phrase finishes off by outlining key notes from the Bdim7 chord in bar 28. A highly melodic phrase leads from the third beat of this bar into the first beat of the next, where we find a chromatically descending arpeggio motif similar to the one that appears in example eight in *BGM* 106. This descending motif continues for two bars before leading into a changing arpeggio based melody that neatly ties up the whole solo as it lands on the root of the Abmaj7 chord in bar 33.

By studying an involved solo such as the one I have presented here, you will gain important insights into how to draw together different elements that can enable you to create effective solos. If you put the time into understanding what is actually going on musically, you can use this knowledge as a tool for creativity. Enjoy…

PHIL MANN

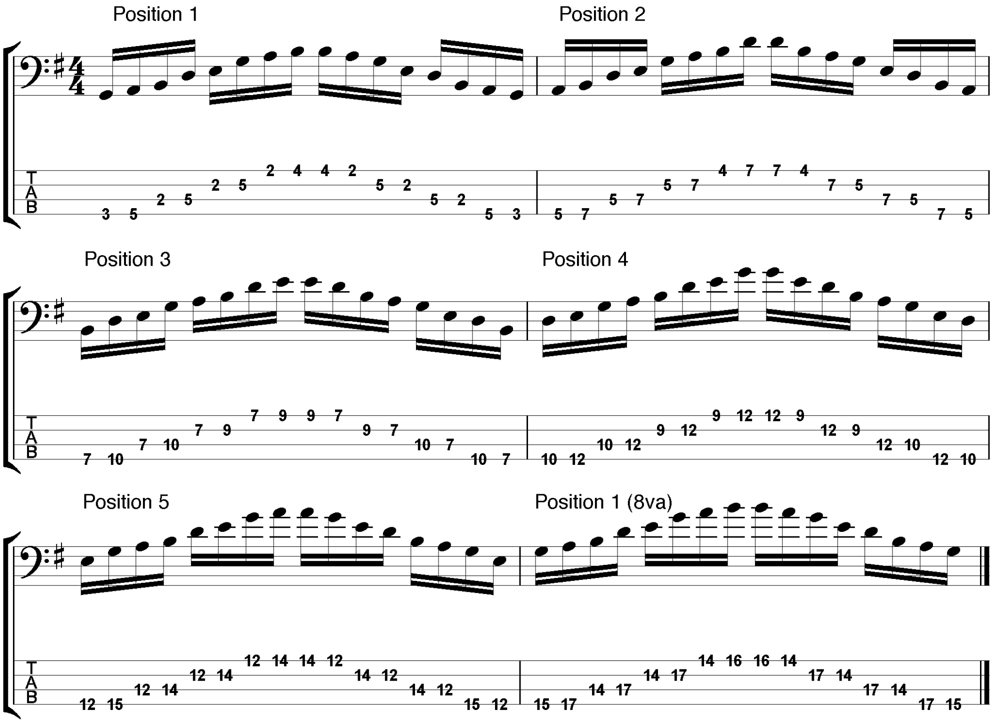
IT'S TIME TO GET THOSE FINGERS IN SHAPE, DECLARES TECHNIQUE MAESTRO MANN

It seems like forever since you last heard from me, but finally a month has passed and we're back in the woodshed for some more metacarpal pilates designed to tie your fingers in knots.

Last month we commenced the expansion of our tapping-based vocabulary by introducing pentatonic scales to the pallet. Pentatonics can come in two primary forms: hemitonic, which contain one or more semitones, and anhemitonic, which don't contain any. More commonly, contemporary players are likely to come into contact with the latter, in both their major and minor form, devised from the major scale (Ionian) and the natural minor scale (Aeolian).

Let's begin today's study by refreshing the vocabulary we covered in the last issue of BGM. Exercise one focuses on the five pentatonic positions available on a conventional four-string bass guitar. You'll see that each position starts from the second note of the previous.

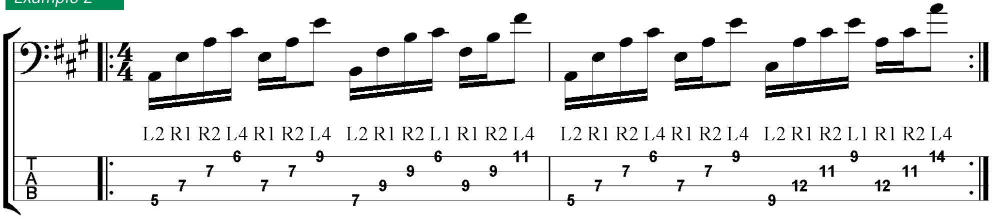
Exercise 1



All of today's exercises will focus on the introduction of cross-handed tapping, named – as I'm sure you'll have guessed – in reference to the 'crossing' nature of the hands as they move up and down the fingerboard. Exercise two will help you ease into this new technique.

Using the following fingering: L (Left Hand), R (Right Hand), 1 (Index Finger), 2 (Middle Finger), 3 (Ring Finger) and 4 (Little Finger), our first CHT exercise will merge two positions of the pentatonic information every two beats. While keeping the right hand relatively stationary, the left hand plays the initial lower pitches, before crossing the right in order to play the upper extensions. Work through the following exercise and then move it into a number of different key centres.

Example 2

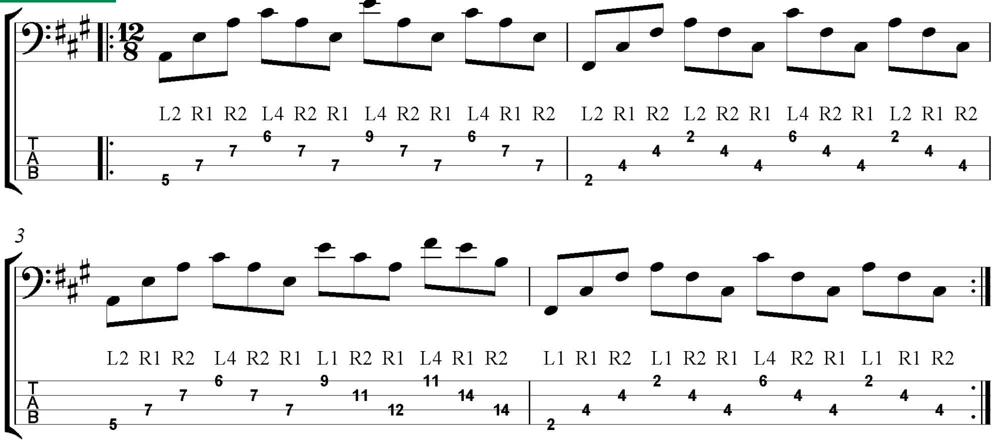


Our third exercise introduces a 12/8 feel. Approach this time signature by breaking down each bar into four groups of three 8th notes. The motif here focuses primarily on the technique introduced in Exercise two: however, this time you'll find that there is a lot more movement in the progression. Try to identify which patterns are being used in each bar as this will help you to reinforce your understanding of the pentatonic shapes being applied.

Extending your tone life

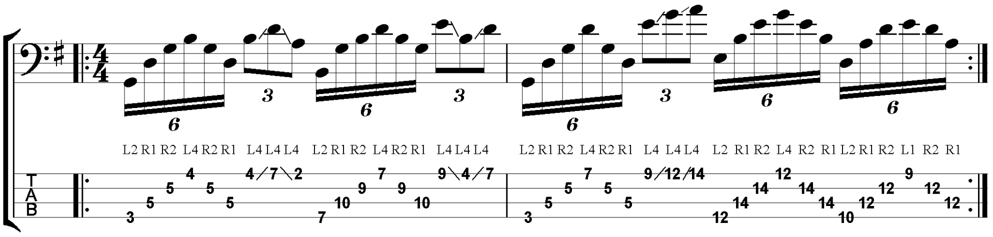
Now, if you recall, last month we were briefly introduced to sextuplets, which are groups of six notes during the space of a single beat. If you say to yourself 'One-and-a-sex-tup-let' you can achieve the desired rhythm. An alternative, equally effective phonetic is 'Bib-a-di-bob-a-di' which I personally prefer.

Example 3



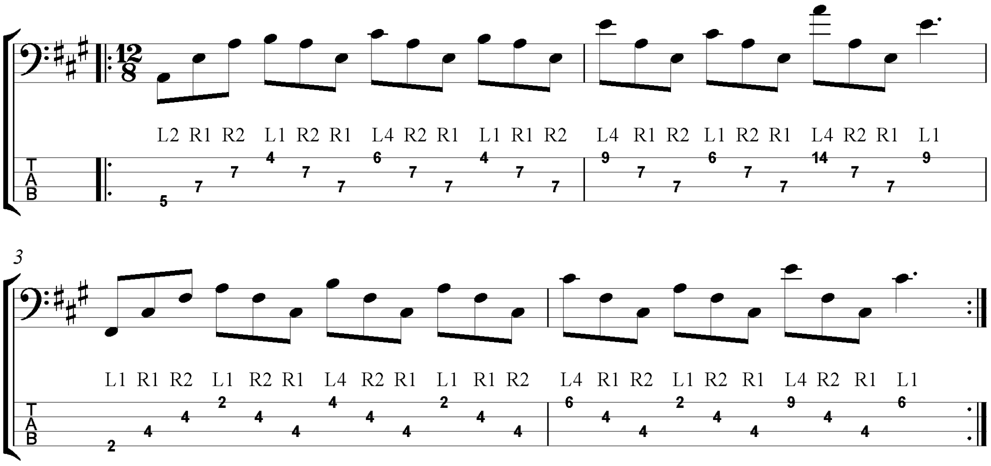
Example 4

\revisits this rhythmical tomfoolery and also introduces a second element to the programme of events. The patterns found on the first and third beats of each bar should, by now, feel somewhat familiar: however, surrounding these voicings you'll also discover a sliding element to be executed by the left hand. The exercise finishes with a phrase produced from a descending sextuplet.



Example 5

The final exercise in this month's studies embraces the first and fifth position of the major pentatonic. For the keen-eyed folk out there, you'll identify this as the relative minor. Designed purely as an exercise to increase your accuracy and ability with the cross-handed technique, make sure you analyse what is going on and are able to identify the position that each idea has originated from. Until next time, practise hard!



DAVID ETHERIDGE

DAVID ETHERIDGE LOOKS AT 12-BAR BASS PARTS

Now, let's make life even more interesting with our basic 12-bar progression. Here we'll use everything we've looked at so far: chord notes, scalic runs, and chromatic intervals, but now we'll add some progressions and turnarounds to make things even more interesting.

Let's look at example one in detail: in bar 1 the bass-line runs in semitones from F through E natural to Eb. The E natural is interesting as it implies a b5 to the Bb7 chord in bar 1, and makes a smooth semitone transition to the Eb chord in bar 2. This approach (using the b5 in a chord) is called tritone substitution: a tritone is three whole tones down from your original chord note: Bb -Ab/G# -Gb/F# -E. I was using this kind of approach for years before I was told what it was – to me it just sounded good.

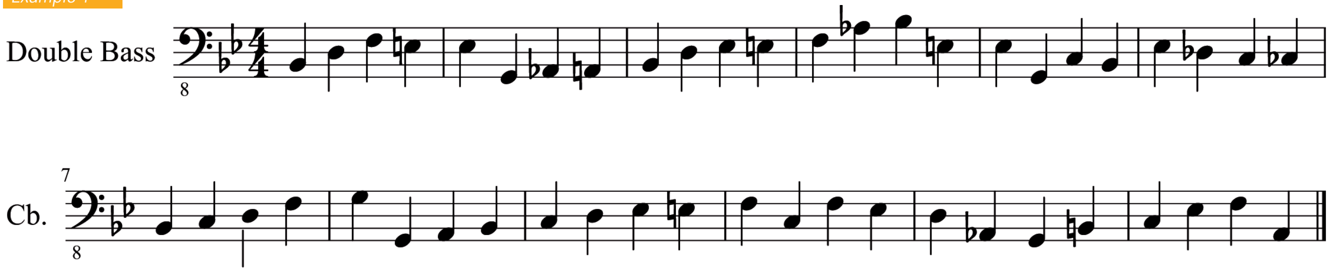
Bars 2 and 3 are by now familiar fare, but in bar 4 we're adding a substitution: the F and Ab provide an Fm7 to Bb7b5 (II-V-I) progression to lead us to Eb6 in bar 5. In bar 6 we have an Eb7 chord, with the chromatic Cb movement down to Bb in bar 7. You could change the final F there to F# for the change to a new chord in bar 8 with is Gm7, although you could have G7 if you changed the final Bb to B natural. In bar 9 the new chord is Cm7, while bars 11 and 12 provide a turnaround: a variation of the I-VI-II-V progression we looked at a few months ago. Here we have the III chord of Bb (Dm7) but with another b5 in the bass line, leading to G7, then to Cm7 and F7 to complete a more interesting progression overall.

Let's change this around a little more. In example two I've added E natural half way through, to give an Eb to Edim progression, while bar 3 provides an Fm7 chord to Bb7 in bar 4, leading to the Eb chord in bar 5 –another II-V-I movement (with the Eb being the I in this case). Bar 6 emphasises the Edim chord, and you could add a C# on the last beat if you wanted to, while bar 7 implies a Bb to Cmin7 progression each of 2 beats, although here we use the 5th of the chord (F) rather than the Bb. Bar 8 shows a III-VI movement with chromatic notes to smooth the movement between chords with semitone steps, which is again used at the end of bar 10 (C#) for the III-VI-II-V progression in the last two bars. Notice there the b5 on the Dm7 (bar 11) and Cm7 (bar 12) progressions.

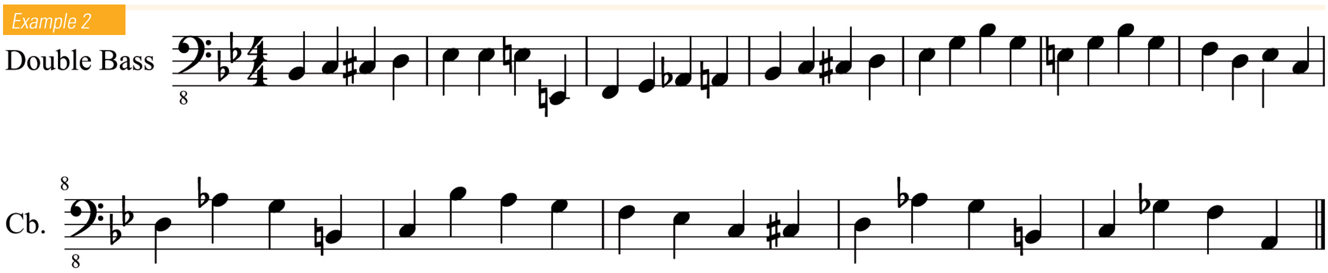
Example three shows a subtly different approach: scale steps in bars 1 to 3 on the first beat, combined with chromatic steps in the rest of each bar, while bar 4 is all chromatic movement. In fact you could work with other musicians to make the progression in bars 1 and 2 Bb-Cm7-C#dim-Bb7/D, then the same a fourth up: Eb-Fm7-F#dim-Eb7/G. In bar 3 the chords might now be Bb-Bb7-Eb/G-Gbdim, and bar 4 Bb/F Edim (or Bb7b5) -Eb7-Bb/D. This can add great sophistication to the chords.

Bar 5 is a simple Eb, which could add the 7th or 9th to the chord above, while in bar 6 we take a musical turn and

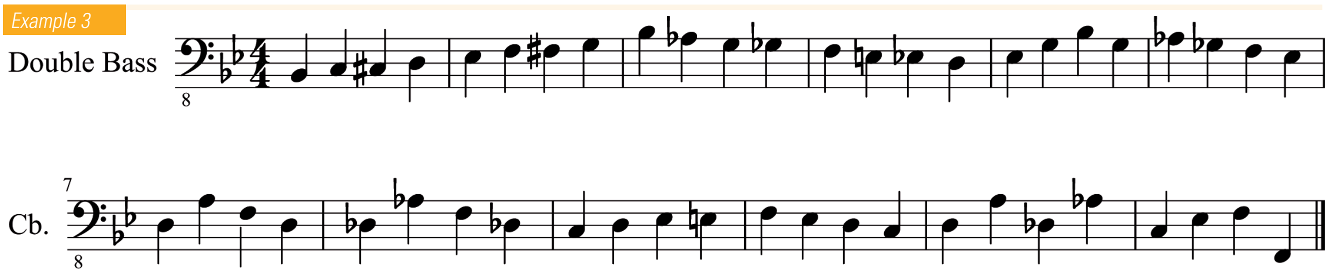
Example 1



Example 2



Example 3



Extending your tone life

go to Ab7 for the whole bar. Bars 7, 8 and 9 show a semitone fall in the chords in each bar: Dm (7), Db7, and going to Cm (7 if you wish). Notice the E natural at the end of the bar offering the choice of changing to a C7 on the last beat, or used as a passing tone to the F7 in the next bar. The turnaround in the last two bars is an echo of bars 7 and 8 with two beats each on the Dm7-Db7-Cm7-F7 chord run. Try playing these progressions yourself, and hear in your mind the chord implications.

Already we're a world away from our basic three-chord 12-bar. We've got the lot: chord notes, scales, chromatic runs, substitute chords and tritone substitutions. These are meat and drink to bassists with inquiring minds, and you can never reach the end of possibilities with this approach. Every time you play a 12-bar chorus, your bass-lines can be completely different.

MIKE BROOKS

GETTING A BAND STARTED IS EASY PEASY, RIGHT? THINK AGAIN, WARNS BROOKSY

Hello again and welcome back. This month's column focuses on how to start a band, a question I've been asked many times. Although there isn't a definitive answer – trying to find the right band members can be like searching for a needle in a haystack – here are some pointers that you might find useful to quicken the process.

You need to decide early on whether your band is going to be made up of friends you already know, or if you will be looking and advertising for band members. Do you know what instrumentation you want for the band? Unless you only intend to play instrumentals, you're going to need a singer. Backing vocals really add to a band's sound: do you want the musos to sing, or will you have separate backing vocalists? It is prudent to think about how many people will be in the band, especially if this will be a moneymaking venture. The more bodies there are, the further the money has to spread – which means less in everyone's pocket.

There is also the small issue of who will run the band. Will it be a democratic team effort, or will one person call the shots? Maybe it'll be a partnership with one or two regular members and a floating cast of players based on availability. I've seen the pros and cons of each, and heard all of the arguments for and against. There is no 'best' method, just as I've never come across a '100% perfectly happy' band. People skills are vitally important and from the outset, it is crucial to decide whether you want amazing musicians who might be a pain in the backside to deal with, lovely people who aren't fabulous players, or a happy combination of the two. Getting on with your band mates is important, especially if you work abroad and are in close quarters. Remember, there isn't the regular time away from each other that you would have at home.

The band's identity is paramount, as is the type of material and the repertoire. If you only play songs that the band likes for personal enjoyment, you will limit the size of your audience and make it harder to sell the band to venues and clients. But if the band is run as a business and you treat it as a job, by playing material that people want to hear, dance to and sing along to, you are far more likely to get gigs and repeat bookings. Win, win, win!

Finally, there's the ever-tricky issue of equipment. Band members have their instruments, backline and drums – but what about a PA system? A band can survive without its own PA, but venues that provide one are becoming scarce. To avoid hiring one constantly, it makes sense to buy your own as it will pay for itself in the end – but is the band going to buy it, or will one person buy it and charge the band for its use? All points worth considering – see you next month.

Extending your tone life

STEVE LAWSON

IT'S ALL ABOUT OVERDRIVE THIS MONTH, SAYS FX SITH LORD LAWSON

Distortion, fuzz, overdrive, tube saturation – all ways of describing the process of messing up a perfectly tidy bass sound by increasing the gain to the point where those nice clean peaks in the wave form are crushed and broken. The resulting sound is rich with overtones, all the way from a warm tube sound to Big Muff-style buzzsaw insanity.

The range of distortion-type effects on offer is staggering, and often daunting. So let's see if we can simplify it a little, with the three basic types of distortion – tube, solid state and digital modelling (we'll look at modelling in its own column soon)

Tube overdrive is often the 'warmest', and the most sensitive to variations in input volume. This gives you loads of subtle control, which may or may not be a good thing depending on your right hand technique. If you've got a tube overdrive or tube emulator, turn the gain up about halfway and vary how hard you play with your right hand to see what the effect is: see if you can control the amount of overdrive just from your right hand. Then repeat this using a volume pedal to vary the input level. The ability to repeat is crucial to be able to use any effect on a gig.

Solid-state overdrive/distortion is the basis of most distortion pedals. These work for the most part by overdriving transistors, but the range of possible sounds, and the difference between different pedals can be staggering. I own four different overdrive pedals and one fuzz pedal, and take all of them to every gig, even though I also have a heavily programmable overdrive/gain/preamp stage in my Lexicon rack unit. Why? They all do different things to the sound.

First in my signal chain is my Markbass Mini Dist, which I have on all the time, with the gain control at zero. It's important to remember that gain-based effects don't have to break up to have an impact on your sound: subtly squashing the waveform can drastically change the character of your bass. That pedal is as much a part of my sound as the strings or preamp on my bass. After that, I have a Darkglass VMT, which brilliantly emulates tube overdrive in an all-analogue pedal. Then there's a MXR Bass overdrive, which retains low end clarity better than any overdrive or distortion pedal I've ever tried: if I need a distorted sound for a 'normal' bass part, this is where I go. Finally the Aguilar Agro, which has the widest range of any of them, from subtle 'softening' through to full-on death metal mayhem. I use that one a lot in my avant-metal project Torycore.

One effect, four different pedals, thousands of possible sounds. When you combine different overdrives, things get really gnarly. The effect order will change the sound again, as will what you put in between. I use my chorus pedal in between the Darkglass VMT and the MXR Bass Overdrive for a really messed-up 'broken amp' effect. The resulting tone is so rich with overtones and artefacts; I could listen to it all day.

As with all effects, you'll never know what it will really sound like until you use it in your music with your other gear, so borrow as many different pedals as you can before going shopping. And who knows, you may end up needing a whole board full of overdrives.

Extending your tone life

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